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My Life of High Adventure

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by GRANT H. PEARSON

with PHILIP NEWILL



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with Philip Newill

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A Word of Thanks

OVER A PERIOD OF MANY YEARS I have told of my adventures in the field of conversation to many groups of people in all walks of life. They seemed to be interested in my work in the north country and in the field of natural history. Many have said, "All those experiences! Ranger, why don't you put together a book about them?" Well, here it is.

To me, my many years in the wilderness areas of our national parks and monuments have been an education in the field of conservation and protection of God's handicraft.

They have given me the opportunity to work with many of the great scientists in the field of natural history and exploration. I have met four Secretaries of the Interior, all of Alaska's governors since 1925, hundreds of U.S. Senators, Representatives and other officials. On one occasion my job as a ranger even required that I cook breakfast at the Wonder Lake Ranger Station for sixteen Senators and Representatives. They weren't fussy. After 17 years I still hear from some of them.

Each of these many people, in his own way, contributed to the richness of the life I lived. The many old-time Alaskan sourdoughs I have known taught me much about how to combat the difficult ways of the North.

It was the encouragement and help of my dear wife that spurred me on to finish this book. Not to be forgotten is the great writing help given to me by my good friend Phil Newill.

I owe a great deal to my fellow workers for their help, encouragement and friendship. The same goes for the many mountain climbers and explorers I have had the opportunity to work with.

Through it all, the one remembrance that will linger most in my mind is of those years I mushed sled dogs over the wilderness trails of the north country. I'll never forget those Huskies and Malemutes,

my faithful companions of the winter trails, sometimes my only bulwark against utter loneliness.

When I started in at Mt. McKinley National Park 35 years ago, it was rough, rugged and a real challenge. Probably the reason I stuck it out was that I would not admit defeat. But I think I must have enjoyed every day of it, both the good and the bad ones; if I had my life to live over again, I'd want it just the way it was. What more could one ask for?

Those "good old days" are of course easier to look back upon. However, there are still plenty of challenges left in the north country, for those who seek them. The natural elements cannot be controlled and there will always be many problems to face.

After more than 35 years devoted to the field of conservation, it is with pleasure that I finish out some of my remaining days as an Alaska State Representative, with the hope that I may in some way help this grand and alluring new state of Alaska to prosper and grow.

Grant H. Pearson.

About Grant Pearson

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY Americans today realize what it meant when an Alaskan in the Twenties stuck out his chest, took on an air of importance and mentioned that he was "going Outside." It meant breaking out of a huge, walled-off area. For anyone in the vast Alaska interior it involved getting to tidewater over Alaska's winding 470-mile railroad, or via the single rut-filled auto road, or going by dog sled; then it meant taking a far-from-cheap five-day ocean voyage to Seattle, a distance equal to halfway across the Atlantic. When Grant Pearson hit Alaska in '25 the only communication with "the States" was by ship—a once-a-week mail boat in winter, somewhat more frequent runs in summer; no air lines, no telephone, and, of course, no highway.

But Alaskans would hoot if you talked about them as shut in. They certainly didn't think of themselves that way. Perhaps some of them might mention "Outside" with a trace of the nostalgia Englishmen in India once had when they talked of "Home." But people up North were an almost compulsively hopeful breed. They pointed with pride to every slightest evidence of progress in their land. "Why, look!" they'd say, "Just two years ago our great Alaska Railroad was completed from Seward clear to Fairbanks. It's one of the great railway-engineering feats of the world; President Harding himself came up to dedicate it. And as for roads! The Richardson Trail, all 365 miles from Fairbanks to Valdez, has been graded, widened for automobile travel and re-named the Richardson Highway. There's even talk of paving it eventually." Then Alaskans would likely add that more and more salmon were being packed; that tourists would soon be coming to see the great wonder, Mt. McKinley National Park, and industry just couldn't help but come in and boom the country, as soon as Alaska's delegates to Congress got the freight rates lowered. Oh, Alaska was on the move, all right, they'd tell you.

There was a good reason why those sourdoughs were so optimistic. They always have been, and probably always will be, because the beaten and discouraged souls who get tired of the frontier struggle simply go back Outside without telling anybody about it—carrying their discouragement with them.

But let's take a look at what Alaska was really like when Grant got there. The fact was, in the booming Twenties Alaska was in a state of depression. The population had slumped from 64,000 in 1910 to 55,000 in 1920, of which close to 35,000 were Indians and Eskimos; by 1959 it had only gone up to 59,000. The Federal government, owner of 90 per cent of Alaska's land, was cutting appropriations for services and improvements. Calvin Coolidge flatly stated that the government was spending too much money on 20,000 people. (He meant the white people; maybe nobody ever told him about the thirty-odd thousand natives—at least, nobody ever sent him a Tlingit war bonnet.)

The biggest blow to Alaska had come in the form of a nifty dead-fall called the Jones Act. It was put through Congress in 1920 by Wesley Jones, Senator from Washington, to the great advantage of Seattle-Alaska shipping firms, although as far as Alaskans were concerned, the "Alaska" part was a misnomer. Those shipping interests were simply another of the absentee ownerships that had been plaguing the territory for fifty years. The trigger in the trap was a clause stating that while freight destined overseas could be shipped westward on either Canadian or U.S. railroads, and sent on U.S. or foreign ships anywhere across the Pacific, this was to be "excluding Alaska."

Those two words had two immediate results: they sent Alaska's cost of living skyrocketing, and they put many new industries completely out of business. Just one example: a small sawmill operator, cutting spruce into lumber and shipping it to Vancouver at five dollars a thousand board foot, suddenly found his rate, via Seattle, upped to eleven dollars a thousand. The mill had to shut down.

This was the situation when Grant Pearson found himself scratching around for a job in Fairbanks in the winter of '25 and '26. Prices were fantastic, and wages for the available jobs, while wonderfully high by Stateside standards, were running a poor second

to the cost of food, housing and keeping warm. Alaska, with the aid of the U.S. Congress, had achieved a combination of inflation and depression.

When depression hit the States, Alaska came up with another paradox. She began to prosper. As jobs got scarce in the U.S., people came up to Alaska and panned gold. (They did the same thing, incidentally, in the Mother Lode country of California.) That 75 per cent increase in the price of gold, from \$20.67 to \$35 an ounce, started a mining boom. In 1935 the Federal Emergency Relief Administration picked out two hundred depression-hit farm families in the Middle West, sent them up to the Matanuska Valley just north of Anchorage, and set them up with house, barn, well, tools and forty acres of land. In McKinley Park, while Ranger Grant Pearson was watching CCC boys building trails and cabins, the WPA was putting up the big new McKinley Park Hotel. WPA funds were being spent throughout Alaska, bringing workmen to build schools, water works, bridges, even restore totem poles. The population grew. By 1939 it was 72,000, and Alaska was even beginning to do something about a chronic shortage in one all-important natural resource—women. In 1910 there were five men for every two women; by 1939 it was down to three men for every two women.

For some strange reason, almost no government money was spent during this time on one of Alaska's greatest needs—roads and airfields. It took the Second World War to enforce recognition of that necessity, and McKinley Park was among the last spots to benefit. A year after V-J Day Grant Pearson, as McKinley superintendent, found himself in a helicopter making a survey flight over the route of a proposed automobile road into the park.

"I had a kind of mixed-up feeling about it," Grant says. "No one was trying harder than I was to get that approach road built. Just the same, down in my heart I hated to see it come. The real wilderness I loved would certainly be changed."

Today, in this great new state that's so big it has four separate time zones, more and more highways are being built. In the last state legislature Grant, now a representative from Alaska's 18th District, worked and voted for a 450-mile ferry boat ride linking two great highway systems. (It passed. You'll read about it in Chap-

ter 19.) The new state is building schools, hospitals and other public works. But statehood has done more than that; it has, I think, served to turn Alaskans finally away from the quick-buck grab for every natural resource, because that resource is now no longer the property of a remote Federal government. Today it's their own.

Since gold rush days, people had come to Alaska not so much to settle as to get rich quick. The mental attitude of "get in, get it, get out" was one of the big drags on Alaskan development. Even Alaskans finally came to recognize this; that is why, today, they speak so affectionately of old "Cap" Lathrop of Fairbanks and Anchorage, a millionaire who never sent a penny of his Alaska-made wealth outside. He put all the dollars from his coal mines to work building up a wild variety of Alaska businesses: banks, movie theaters, newspapers, general stores, apartments, truck lines, even radio stations.

Cap was Mayor of Cordova in 1911 when the Alaska version of the Boston Tea Party was held. Alaskans were seething at the continued locking up of Alaska coal by restrictive mining-claim laws and a complete prohibition of mining patents on the 90 per cent of Alaska that was Federal domain. Alaskans were forced to buy shipped-in coal at far greater cost; some of it was used in Fairbanks to burn in effigy conservationist Gifford Pinchot, who was thought to be to blame for the lock-up. Cordovans were particularly incensed; a shipload of costly British Columbia coal had been unloaded on their dock. One day the citizens were observed gathering together shovels and assembling them back of Cap Lathrop's Alaska Transfer Company warehouse. They shouldered the shovels, marched to the dock and shoveled into the water several hundred tons of high-priced Canadian coal. When the Cordova police chief ordered them to stop, they yelled "Give us Alaska coal!" and kept on shovelling. It took Congress until 1915 to pass a law permitting the leasing of Federal lands for coal mining. When it did, Cap Lathrop was Johnny-on-the-spot staking out the claims that made him rich. A few years ago all Alaska mourned when Cap, at the age of 74, was prowling around in one of his mines and was killed by a runaway ore car.

You meet a lot of splendid people up there in the North. Ernest Gruening, now one of Alaska's U.S. Senators, once wrote, "In Alaska

a man or a woman is judged not by family, means or previous state-side condition, but by what he is and can do in Alaska."

If that is true, then one member of the true aristocracy of the North is my friend Grant Pearson.

Newton Drury, formerly head of the National Park Service, said of Grant, "The key to a man's success is the ability to adjust himself to his surroundings. Grant Pearson has been able to do this to perfection." Erling Strom, Grant's partner on the 1932 McKinley climb, went even more sharply to the point. He said, "Grant's the finest outdoors man I ever met. He can do *anything*."

I suppose there are other guys in the world who are as friendly, as honest, and as capable as Grant is. If so, I'd like to meet 'em. But first, I'd like you to meet Grant . . .

Philip Newill

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My Life of High Adventure

1



Smack in the Middle of Nowhere

IT WAS THREE IN THE AFTERNOON, and getting dark. I dropped down onto the wind-packed snow at the top of Riley Creek Pass, more dog-tired and more alone than I had even been in my life.

I didn't really mind being alone up there; I had always been pretty good company for myself. But in my earlier wild country roamings in the States, there had always been a ranch or settlement within six or seven miles. I hadn't realized what a comfort that had been, until I sat on the summit of that lonesome Alaska Range pass.

The temperature was 20 below. My pack had come to weigh about a ton. Long black shadows were pencilling out ahead of me. I looked back and saw the early March darkness creeping up the pass, stalking me from behind. Domed tops of mountains rose up on either side of me, knife-edge ridges trailing down from them.

I got up and started on. At least, the last eight miles of snowshoeing would be downhill through this wilderness that was Mt. McKinley National Park in 1926.

Half a mile down the steep grade of Windy Creek, I suddenly went right through the snow, into icy water over my boot tops. I had been walking on the top of the creek itself.

Young and innocent as I was, I had learned some words to use on such occasions. I used them all—with repeats of favorites. Then I scrambled out onto solid snow and knocked the quickly forming ice off my snowshoes. "Now," I thought disgustedly, "you're *really* in for it." With wet feet, there would be no stopping until I reached the distant ranger's cabin where the park superintendent's orders were taking me.

Windy Creek had another trick up its frozen sleeve: overflow

ice. This is caused by the creek at one point freezing tight to its creek bed, so that water coming down from above has to flow over the top. Then it freezes, too. When I struck this natural slide, my snowshoes sailed out beautifully, and I lit on the seat of my pants. My fifty-pound pack was no help when I tried to get up. I struggled and thrashed around, six feet of unhappy human. I told that ice what I thought of it; but there was something more than anger in what I was now feeling. I was beginning to think I didn't belong in this country after all, and that the country knew it.

It was full dark when I got down to the forks of Windy Creek. This was a landmark I had been looking for; it told me I had only two more miles to go. What it didn't tell me was that those last two miles were going to be harder than all the other thirty I had hiked that day.

Windy Creek valley is sheltered at this point, and well timbered; the snow was loose, deep and soft. I sank more than a foot at every step, and had to pull out my other snowshoe before I could take the next step.

The superintendent had made a trip by dog team to the Windy Creek cabin a month before. "You'll see where the sled trail I made turns away from the creek into the woods," he said. "Just follow it." He hadn't figured that I would be wandering around in the dark, attempting to be a hero and in one day make a hike he had plainly told me would take two.

I cut away from the creek at a place where I judged the trail to be. The going was so tough I had to stop every two hundred feet, to catch my breath. Once I caromed off a lurking tree and fell flat on my face.

"Grant," I said aloud, "what the devil are you doing here, anyhow?"

Of course I knew the answer to that. It had begun long before and far away in Michigan, with a small boy sitting atop a stump on a half-cleared farm, dreaming of high adventure in the glorious frontier land of Alaska.

But right now, eager to prove myself and exulting in what my muscles could do, the young fellow who was Grant Pearson, new and very green National Park Ranger, was beginning to get good and scared. It was dark. I was lost. I was up to my knees in soft snow. My feet were wet, and the thermometer was well on the lower

side of zero. Getting scared was probably the first sensible thing I had done for a couple of hours.

When I finally found that cabin, by bumping into it in the chilly dark, my notions of heroics had undergone a revision. I was beginning to get a glimmering of the fact that there are no heroes in the wilderness, only wise men and men not so wise.

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2



Boy on a Stump

THE NORTH SIDE OF THE STRAITS OF MACKINAC in the year 1914 was a new kind of backwoods—the ebb wash of the great tide of lumbering that had swept up through Michigan in the '80's and '90's. Farmers wrestling to clear the land of stumps made occasional open spaces in the thick, spindly second growth. Walking along a dust-and-corduroy road leading northward between the stumps, hazel brush and scrub pine was a gangling 14-year-old boy with, I imagine, a look of determination on his face.

I was walking out, this day in the August heat-haze, on a situation that had become intolerable. I wasn't leaving home; I was leaving a farm where my mother had had to place me when our home had broken up the year before. For my bed and board I only had to do chores night and morning on school days—milk thirteen cows, feed the pigs and chickens, hoe the garden—and work, of course, all day Saturday and part of Sunday, shocking hay, mending fences, clearing new land. There was no featherbedding on Mack Dunbar's Michigan farm. Still, I might have endured it—might even have grown to like it for a while, since there is a pleasant rhythm to farm work—if I had been treated as anything but a rather inefficient slave. Particularly by the sharp-eyed Mrs. Dunbar. A boy working needs to have his work respected, even if not praised. Most of the time what I got for a mended gate or a weeded lettuce bed was, "Hmph. It'll do, I guess. Better get started milking."

How different from my mother! She was now working as cook in a hotel in the town of St. Ignace on the Strait. She had brought me with her to Michigan when we had finally had to give up our home in Litchfield, Minnesota, the year before. She had left behind, with

a stricken look I never want to see on anyone's face again, my older brothers Harry and Fred, with friends who were retired farmers in Litchfield.

Mother had held onto our four-room square box of a home for six years after my father had left her. The three of us boys had pitched in to help without thinking much about it, not even worrying a great deal about what had become of Father. We had a newspaper route that was a Pearson family property; we caught frogs and sold them to a dealer who shipped them sixty miles to Minneapolis; we picked wild horse radish and sold it at five cents a bunch; we took the banker's cow out to pasture every day, for which the Pearson family received two quarts of milk—milked by Mother after she had finished her own jobs of laundering, cooking and housework for other families.

Even for my mother's determined energy, the struggle had finally been too much; she had had to make the decision to go to St. Ignace, near where her seven brothers had backwoods "stump farms."

I was headed for one of those stump farms now—the one belonging to my uncle Enoch Simmons and his wife Millie. I had made the ten-mile hike many times before. I liked my Aunt Millie; but Uncle Enoch was the finest uncle a boy ever had, and a great man as well, even though his farm was only made up of stumps and woods. My Uncle Enoch talked to me as though I was his equal—even asking my advice once. That means a lot to any boy. In my situation, it was like a door swinging open.

As I walked up the packed-dirt path to Uncle Enoch's weathered two-story log cabin, a sudden fear struck me. Suppose Uncle Enoch and Aunt Millie told me I had to go back?

My uncle came to the door when I knocked, and stood tall and gray in the doorway, listening gravely as I blurted out my reason for being there. When I came to the end and said, "So *can* I? Can I stay and not go back to the Dunbars?" Uncle Enoch smiled slightly, mostly around his eyes.

"No good at the Dunbars, eh? Know how you feel, Grant. Glad to have you here as a partner. I think we'll work together okay."

"Gee," I said, "geel" I turned away quickly. I was not going to show my new partner there were tears in my eyes.

Uncle Enoch said, "Your aunt's down tending the chickens. Come

on in." He put an arm around my shoulder and we went inside, into the single ground-floor room that was combination kitchen and parlor. From a shelf behind a curtain he took out a folded bed tick.

"Take this out to the barn and fill it with hay. Then," he pointed to the head of the rickety stairs going up the back wall, "we'll bed you down up there in the store room, alongside our bedroom. It has a good bunk."

"Swell. I won't take up much room." I would gladly have slept in the tool shed, let alone right in the house.

The big downstairs room—it was 16 by 24—had many shelves on its long walls, mostly filled with books. When I got back with my bulging tick, Aunt Millie's welcoming hug still tingling my shoulders, Uncle Enoch was looking at a bookshelf thoughtfully.

"Grant, you've had a year in high school, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"You know school is too far away from this farm for you to go back next fall?"

"Well, I hadn't thought . . ."

"All right. Don't look so scared. You might as well learn the way I did. Read these books. Read everything that interests you. There's plenty here. But," he smiled at my broad, relieved grin, "be sure your interests are wide enough."

That was how I learned about a place called Alaska. My uncle had a sizable collection of Gold Rush literature, and I plunged in, every chance I got between working with him getting out cedar posts, poles and pulpwood from his woods, and helping Aunt Millie with the garden. I practically swallowed whole *The Call of the Wild*, *The Spoilers*, *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*, and other such tales of adventure in Alaska and the Yukon. When I had read my uncle's store on the subject, I hiked the twenty miles to the St. Ignace library and got more.

Sitting on a stump in the lake country's hazy sunshine, I would shiver with excitement as I read. Did it ever really get to be forty below zero? Did men really mush with dog teams under flashing northern lights, up where it was dark all day long? Right then I determined to find out. Some day I would leave this overcivilized farming country and head for the real frontier, the glamorous Frozen North.

It largely escaped my uncritical eye that many of the so-called true stories of the north were that combination of fact and romanticizing fashionable among the newspaper correspondents of the day. I met and admired, as only a boy can, such legendary figures as The Going Kid, The Malemute Kid, Swiftwater Bill, Klondike Mike—it was a day of heroic nicknames. Then there was The Seventy Mile Kid. He became my special hero, I think, because he was the youngest.

Harry Karstens, The Seventy Mile Kid, was eighteen when he landed in Alaska in '97 and began to earn his keep by packing supplies on his back over the back-breaking Chilkoot Pass. He later staked out his own claim, bought a dog team with some of his pay dirt and began to carry winter supplies and mail through the wild Seventy Mile River region. That was how he got his name, The Seventy Mile Kid—miner, mail carrier, dog team freighter. He traveled alone and slept in his tent, snug in a moosehide sleeping bag.

I specially liked a tale he told about himself: camping in the Seventy Mile country one night, he was wakened by a bright light. His tent had caught fire. He piled out in a hurry, leaving his sleeping bag and his clothes. He was wearing only long underwear. The thermometer was bumping minus forty.

It was just luck that he happened to have several canvas tarpaulins as freight on his sled. Working fast, he slashed these up, fashioning a many-folded scarecrow kind of suit. Then, in the crackling cold dark, The Kid mushed his dog team thirty miles to the nearest settlement, running most of the way to avoid freezing to death. "One thing in my favor," he wound up his story, "I had a darn good suit of underwear!"

It takes tough men to lick a tough country, even though some of the men aren't old enough to vote.

Of course I wanted to be like those men, and the first thing to do was to go to Alaska—sometime, somehow. I think this is the way most boys get their ideas about what to do with their vague and splendid futures. It comes about largely without their thinking, just a gentle nudge in the back by the finger of fate.

My reading diet wasn't all frozen dessert, of course. As soon as I could, I had gone into town and told my mother about my new

arrangement, and what Uncle Enoch had said about learning by reading.

"And Mother, I can do it," I assured her. "I know I can." My mother just nodded. I guess she had inspected my uncle's library. But later that day she got an arithmetic and a geography book, and handed them to me.

"Grant, you study these, too. Then, if we ever get straightened around again, you can go back into school in your rightful place." She didn't even mention my going to live with some other farmer that winter, close enough to town so I could go to school. She had seen, and understood, how desperately I wanted to stick to the plan I'd made.

I was so grateful I studied those two books hard and long . . . anyway it seemed long and hard to me, until I mastered them.

The next two years went by, as they will for boys, with the unseen swiftness of a breeze in the birches. I became an accomplished logger, even rode my uncle's pulpwood rafts through the white water of the Pine River to Lake Huron. I also learned how to bring in my quota for the larder with a rifle: deer, rabbits, partridge. I even learned to pick off squirrels. Aunt Millie had arranged for me to take a high school correspondence course, and evenings I used up her kerosene studying. Once a week I visited my mother and the St. Ignace library. One week-end I read in the paper that our country had entered the war.

This began, for me, a year of frustration. I hurried down to the St. Ignace railroad station, just in time to catch the morning train for Sault Ste. Marie. There was a naval station at the Soo, and I was off to enlist. On the train I wrote two hasty notes, one to my mother and one to Uncle Enoch and Aunt Millie. I'm afraid I used such phrases as "Off to serve my country," and "We'll lick the Kaiser—quick!"

At the naval recruiting office I got this reception from the bo'sun in charge:

"You're too young, Pearson. Come back in six months."

"I thought the Navy took 'em younger than the Army."

"We do. But not sixteen and a half. Come back when you're seventeen. Get a job on one of the lake boats. You're husky enough. The experience will help you when you join up. Now run along, son."

I seethed at that "run along, son." But I took the man's advice. After making such abrupt and final good-byes, I couldn't go back home. A job as coal passer on the ore boat *Melisande* called for six hours on and six hours off. I took it, still mad at that navy bo'sun.

During those six hours off, I soon found myself getting into a lot of fights, both ashore and with the crew members. I didn't realize it, but I was working off steam at being kept out of the main fight. When the *Melisande* would hit Duluth, Gary or Toledo I'd hear bands playing "Over There" and "Long, Long Trail." I'd see soldiers and sailors in the uniforms I wanted to be wearing. Once I saw a long line of troops, their felt campaign hats all at a cocky angle, guns over shoulders, packs on backs, marching up the gangplank onto a lake troopship. The sight pulled at all my youthful instincts, adding to my frustration. I must have been a pretty impossible young fellow to have around—big, strong and belligerent, always out to prove myself.

More or less by request, I quit passing ore and got a job as a deck hand on a ferry to Mackinac Island. Here, an echo of the past caught up with me. A couple of old-time steamboat men used to get together off watch and swap stories of the river boats on the Yukon—fabulous tales of running the swift Alaska water, of bucking currents, of fighting ice and alcoholized prospectors. It was fascinating but now, it was remote. For the present, my whole idea was simply, "That war better not stop before I get into it." In March of 1918 I got into the Army by adding a few more months to my age.

I never got to France, but I certainly got a lot of fighting. At Camp Funston, Kansas, still a belligerent type, I decided to learn boxing.

I guess a lot of unexpected things go into making a man what he is—small decisions that add up to large effects he never anticipated. At Camp Funston I soon became a fairly good light-heavy contender in camp matches; and that fight-ring experience did something very important for me, which has lasted through all my years in the North. When I finally realized that I, Grant Pearson, knew how to take care of myself in a slugging match, I didn't go out hunting for fights any more. In fact, I tried hard to avoid them. Sometimes I think I've avoided a few too many, in my time. I still remember some ornery sourdough faces I think would have been improved by permanent alterations I could have made if I

hadn't been so hesitant about starting something I knew I could finish.

The Army cut me loose in March, 1919, and I went like a man shot from a cannon straight to St. Ignace, my mother, and my Uncle Enoch.

My mother, I found, was now a top cook at the main hotel in St. Ignace, much in demand for her skill, working harder but making lots more money. First thing, she asked me what I was going to do. This was embarrassing. I hadn't given it a thought. I said, "I think I'll go see Uncle Enoch."

But when I got to Uncle Enoch's farm, and he asked, "What are you going to do?" I just stood and looked at him.

"I thought maybe I could . . ."

"No. It won't do, Grant. You're grown up now, and this farm hasn't enough work to support two grown men."

"But . . ."

"Look here, son. You're a good logger. Stay here a while with me and your Aunt Millie, then head for the pulpwood camps. They're paying good money, three bucks a day and found. Think it over."

A wise man, my uncle. He knew he couldn't hope to hold me long on that stump farm of his. For the next two years I became a typical logging stiff, banging about from camp to camp, making money and spending it. I wasn't exactly a gay young blade, but I certainly didn't have a worry in the world. Once, having some unspent money, I got the idea of buying "uncut stumpage"—trees—logging it off myself and selling the posts and pulpwood. I got a tract I liked and was on my way, I reckoned, to becoming a big timber magnate. I figured I could average better than \$250 a month.

My mother asked me, when I told her about it, "What about your Alaska idea?"

"Oh, that," I said airily. Circumstances can alter ambitions. My mother simply nodded. Her boy Grant seemed to be doing all right for himself.

Then I ran out of stumpage. There was no more of the cheap stuff to be had, at least not in Michigan. "Grant," I said to myself, "what the Weyerhaeusers did with their timber company, you can do too."

So I invested part of my profits in a severely used Model T, and

took off for the state of Washington where, in 1924, there was supposed to be stumpage aplenty.

In the tall timber about sixty miles outside Seattle, I met two personalities that were to have a tremendous influence on my life. The first was the soaring, inspiring Olympic Range—towering, godlike peaks thrusting their gray granite and snow up through the clouds, saying, "Here we stand. Look at our strength and take strength from us." I was awed. Those mountains gave me something that had been lacking in the gentle, rolling lands of Minnesota and Michigan. When I looked up at them I knew that standing on my own two feet was a good and proud thing. They were jagged and exciting, those peaks—different from the symmetrical, benevolent cones of Rainier, St. Helens and Hood. I decided then and there that, when I'd made enough money at the job I'd taken driving a truck for a logging contractor, before I started in on my own stumpage operation, I'd take the time to climb those mountains, one by one.

The second personality I ran into out there was a stocky, smiling young fellow with shining yellow hair, sparkling blue eyes and a flow of friendly conversation. "I'm Floyd Ballard," he said when we met on the job, filling up a mud-hole in the logging road. "Don't it beat all outdoors how the boss can think up hard ways to do things?"

"It sure does. We should get out of here. I would, if I knew more about the country."

"Well, I do. Plenty. When the time comes, I'm going to start my own gypso company."

"Gypso?"

"Yes. It's a kind of sub-contracting. You take this guy we work for. He's got a contract to deliver pulpwood. I'd sub-contract to get out a certain amount for him, piled and ready. I'd make money, because I'd cut corners, and make less mistakes. All it takes is cash."

"Floyd," I said, "let me tell you what I was doing back in Michigan."

Within a week we had hammered out the details of the Ballard-Pearson gypso company. We pooled our cash and got a sub-contract from the CPT Company where we worked. Floyd and I had no way of knowing that we were headed straight into a set-back for individual enterprise.

We got going fast. We were doing fine, working twelve hours a day, and had just about cracked our investment nut in an old truck, gasoline-powered drag saw, tools and a tractor hired to swamp out our road. We were beginning to add up the profits we'd soon be making under the kerosene lamp in the spruce-shake cabin we had built. Then we got some mail.

The contractor had sold out. The new buyer wanted no part of gyppo sub-contracting. We were out of business.

"We've still got our shirts," I said, "even though they're dirty." I tried a grin. I guess I must have looked as if I were baring my fangs. Floyd just looked at me.

"In Oregon," he said, "the logging camps are better. We can get jobs there easy. I know the Columbia River."

"Well . . . okay. Hell!"

I don't believe either Floyd or I were really very much thrown by what had happened. I know I wasn't. I had by this time achieved the special independence accruing to a skilled journeyman worker—a man who can catch on for a job with any outfit having to do with woods, logging, truck driving, even steamboating. I resigned myself to the idea that it was going to take a little longer to become a millionaire in the timber business. We sold our equipment and hit out for the Columbia River.

Oregon logging jobs, I found, didn't pay more, though we did hit a camp where the food was better and the bunkhouse larger than where we'd been. Floyd and I got jobs as choker setters at \$2.50 a day and found, attaching cable loops four-foot wide to Douglas fir logs, so a donkey engine could haul them, with a great crashing and grinding, to where the logs would be loaded onto railroad cars.

Young men seem to alternate between staring impatience to get ahead, and a firm belief that they have all the time in the world to do whatever they want to do. I was in one of those take-your-time moods when Floyd and I drifted down to the camp wanigan for mail. Floyd had a letter.

We strolled back to the bunkhouse as he read it. He stopped abruptly and looked up. His eyes were sparkling.

He said, "Let's go to Alaska!"

"Huh?"

"This is from my brother. He's up there, in a town called Cordova. He says you can get the best paying jobs in the world in

Alaska. They're building roads—and they're crazy for men. Let's go!"

Alaska . . . it was a word like the sound of a distant train whistle calling. The land of malemutes and Northern Lights. All the exciting pictures I'd dreamed up as a boy came tumbling back.

"How about it, Grant?"

There had just been a rain. The woods around the camp had a fresh, invigorating smell. It seemed like the smell of new and wonderful things to come.

"I'm with you. Let's go."

3



Alaska on Three Dollars

YOU DON'T JUST HAUL OFF and go to Alaska—particularly with winter coming on. We simmered down from our first urge to pack up and get going; we sat on the bunkhouse steps and began to lay astute plans.

Floyd recalled that he had more or less promised to go back for the winter to his father's farm in the Willamette Valley, to help with winter and spring planting. "I'll stay here," I decided. "Maybe I can save my nickels and dimes." We made a pact to meet in exactly six months, on the first of May, at the Hamilton Hotel in Portland.

In the bunkhouse that winter I poured over all the maps of Alaska and the Yukon I could get hold of. I guess I talked about nothing but Alaska. I began to be called "Admiral Peary." I didn't mind a bit.

On the morning of May 1st, 1925, I walked into the lobby of the Hamilton Hotel and there, relaxed in a leather chair, was Floyd, cardboard suitcase at his feet.

We shook hands solemnly. I could see the blue sparks of excitement in Floyd's eyes. It never occurred to me to doubt that he would be there—and I guess he never doubted that I would turn up.

"Your brother still in Cordova?" I asked.

"No. But we'll get jobs, all right. Let's go. Boat leaves from Seattle tomorrow."

Hitch-hiking was not feasible in 1925, so we blew ourselves to a train ride. In Seattle we piled out of the coach and went straight from the railroad station to the Alaska Steamship offices, where we ran up against the one possibility we hadn't planned on.

"Two steerage to Cordova," we told the man at the counter.

"No steerage left. The *Alaska's* filled up. Only thing I have left is a first class stateroom. Outside on A Deck—\$66 apiece."

"Sixty-six dollars!" Floyd gasped. "But steerage is only twenty-seven!"

The clerk merely raised his eyebrows.

"When's the next boat?" I asked.

"On the fifteenth."

We leaned on the counter, pondering the situation. The ticket seller, for whom I now had a great dislike, looked bored. Floyd said, "Grant, it will cost us more to stay here and wait. How much money you got left?"

"Sixty-eight bucks. I couldn't quite make the hundred we'd planned on."

"I've got sixty-seven. Let's take the darn stateroom."

"All right. We'll live high, wide and broke."

We did, too. On the beautiful trip up the long mountain-flanked fjords on the Inside Passage, and on across the Gulf of Alaska, we swanked about that ship as if we owned it. I guess we thought we almost did. After six days of this, we ignored the scowl of our untipped steward and went down the *Alaska's* gangplank onto a fishy-smelling wharf half a mile from the little town of Cordova. We still had our three dollars between us.

First thing we saw when we got off the boat was a hastily-lettered sign, "CLAM DIGGERS WANTED."

"Floyd," I said, "remember what the purser told us? Nearest road-building's more than a hundred miles up country. Let's dig clams for a couple of weeks."

"Sure. I'm tired of owning nothing but a half interest in three bucks."

The cannery was at the far end of the dock. The pay the cannery superintendent offered gave us the impression we had walked into a mint, not a cannery. Twelve dollars a day! We took the jobs quick, told the man we'd see the town and be right back.

"Oh, nonsense. There's nothing to see," the superintendent protested. "And the boat for the clam beds leaves in half an hour. You can't afford to miss it."

Floyd and I hadn't come all the way to Alaska to go right out again on a boat. Besides, we were curious, as only two greenhorns can be. Perhaps the man knew what he was talking about. Anyway,

we intended to see for ourselves. So we walked the half mile to town.

There wasn't so much to see. Cordova was a one-street town, about a block long; it looked like the set for a Tom Mix movie. We dropped in for a beer at a place called The Club, a typical pool-hall, card room, eating joint and wide-open speakeasy. It seemed strangely crowded for a working day.

"How come?" I asked the boy who brought us our drinks. "So many men in the streets, too."

He wiped the table with a rag. "Hadn't you heard, buddy? There's a clam diggers' strike on."

That half-mile walk undoubtedly saved two greenhorns a good mauling. Only we had to get a job, and get it quick.

We found out by nosing around that a town called Chitina, a hundred and twenty-five miles up into the interior, was the terminus of a gravel road on which work was being done. The road connected Fairbanks, in the Yukon valley, with the Copper River Railroad, a mining railway that operated between Cordova and the Kennecott mine sixty miles above Chitina.

We also found out that the passenger fare was ten cents a mile. Our pockets now held less than three dollars—and anyway, the next train didn't leave for four days. Floyd said, "It looks like a long walk."

"Sooner we get started, sooner we get jobs. Maybe we can beat the train."

We stocked up with bread and bologna, picked up our suitcases and headed out along the fireweed-lined railroad track.

The country we began to hike through had a strange look to it, and I finally figured out what it was. There were absolutely no farms, no houses, no signs of humanity. And the trees were different from any I'd seen before. They were mostly cottonwood, which I knew, and spruce, but these trees not only grew wide apart and a scant thirty to forty feet high. The spruce branches were short and stubby, making every tree look as if it had been trimmed with a hedge shears to be as narrow and solemn as a cemetery cypress. (I found out later it was the weight of snow, not hedge shears, that kept the tree branches short. Longer branches would simply be snapped off. This is the way most evergreens look north of the Alaska Panhandle.)

We hiked the railroad ties sixteen hours a day, and after three days a couple of log cabins loomed up alongside the tracks to tell us we had arrived at Chitina. We were footsore; we were hungry; and we badly needed a bath. But we had beaten the train by a day.

That evening the Alaska Road Commission, personified by a man wearing a bright red shirt and a black beard, gave me a job driving a caterpillar tractor (which I'd never driven before, but Black Beard didn't have to know that). Floyd hired out as a teamster. The camp, a few miles out of Chitina, consisted of several white tents and a cookhouse next to the trees. The personnel of this road camp included a foreman, a cook, two tractor drivers, two truck drivers, two teamsters, a graderman and ten laborers. Due to the short summer working season, the work schedule was seven days a week, eight hours a day.

In 1925, this was the pay you got, which we all thought was right fine: foreman, \$165 a month; tractor driver, \$150; cook, \$150; teamster, \$135; truck driver, \$135; graderman, \$135; laborers, \$120. Board and bunk were furnished free. Each man had to provide his own bed roll.

I don't know why they called the thing they were improving a road. In most cases it was only a cleared strip through the brush with two ruts in it. A Model T Ford could get over it in the dry season, but it wouldn't do the Model T any good. I later found out that this was what most Alaska roads were like. I guess they had to call those ruts something, so they called them roads.

After looking the camp over, I found a vacant bunk in one of the tents and rolled in. I figured I could sleep for a week, except that I'd lose a week's wages.

I was wrong. I tossed and turned. I covered my eyes with my arm. In the next bunk was an old-timer whose name was Diamond Willow Holmes. He had a thatch of gray hair and a brown handle-bar mustache, on which he now tugged thoughtfully.

"What's the matter, lad? Can't sleep?"

"I'll sleep as soon as it gets dark," I muttered.

"Then you'll stay awake for ten more weeks."

I could hear him chuckling. What was the old fool talking about? Hiking up the railroad forty miles a day we had been too tired to wait for it to get dark—but of course we knew it would. No darkness at all? How could anybody sleep! Like most people landing in

the summer North, my sleeping apparatus took several days to get used to twenty-four hours of daylight.

But the rest of my senses reached out at once to the vast, exciting openness of this new land. The miles of tundra, with grass and tough little dwarf bushes a foot high, the small blue lakes and the dark patches of evergreens, the bare, sheer mountains, snow-tipped and snow-streaked; this was where I wanted to be. This was pioneer country, rough and untamed, and I was helping to tame it.

The nineteen-twenties' world of coonskin coats and Stutz Bearcats didn't exist in Alaska—not that I had ever had anything to do with such a world. But here, my instinct recognized, there were scant differences between man and man. The big difference seemed to be between men—with their small and personal determinations—and nature in its vast impersonality. The country seemed to say, "Carve out of me what you will, but don't ask for help. If you can take it, it's yours."

There is nothing very thrilling in driving a tractor or pulling a road grader. But every morning when I swung back my tent flap and headed for the cook shack, I got a tingling feeling as I looked out over the beckoning Alaska distances, particularly those leading north to the white peaks of the Wrangell Range thirty miles away. One evening Diamond Willow Holmes and I climbed to the top of a hill behind camp. He was, as usual, carrying one of his peeled diamond willow sticks, a species of willow that has diamond-shaped indentations on the surface. He liked to carve designs around the diamonds. On top of the hill, I spotted another great snow-mountain range about two hundred miles off to the northwest. One mountain looked to have two summits, and to be far higher than anything in the Wrangell Range.

"That's the Alaska Range," Diamond Willow said, "and the big one is the highest peak in North America. Indians used to call it Denali. White men later changed its name to McKinley. Me, I like Denali better."

"Gosh, it's a beautiful mountain. Has it ever been climbed?"

"Once. Archdeacon Stuck, The Seventy Mile Kid and two other fellows climbed it twelve years ago."

The Seventy Mile Kid! A magical name out of the past.

"Did you ever know him—The Seventy Mile Kid?"

"Sure. Twenty years ago he used to run dog-team mail and

freight through this country. He and his partner Charlie McGonagall broke the first trail from Fairbanks to salt water through here."

Diamond Willow stopped to examine the design he was whittling. "The Kid also took passengers, but he told me they were mostly a headache. One time he had to snowshoe alongside the sled the whole three hundred miles from Valdez to Fairbanks, because his passenger insisted on riding. When it came time to pitch camp, that passenger never stirred himself to help. Reckon he figured The Kid was the nearest thing to a butler he could find in these parts. The Kid told me, 'I was so hungry I could have eaten the frying pan, but I cooked for my passenger first. That fellow stowed away a dozen flapjacks and showed no signs of reaching a limit.' Then The Kid blew up. 'Brother,' he said, 'you will now watch me eat. And from here on we eat equal. I can't stand this any longer.' Mr. Passenger still insisted on riding the sled, but after that he helped with the camp work.

"Must have soured The Kid on the whole deal, though. Little while after, he and Charlie McGonagall went over to the McKinley country."

Looking off at Mt. McKinley shining in the 10 p.m. sunshine, I said, "Before I leave Alaska I'm going to get a close-up look at that mountain."

Diamond Willow snapped his pocket knife shut and grinned at me. "Every young fellow comes up here says the same. They all want to climb McKinley. I've heard The Kid tell of *his* climb. You have to be tough, even for an Alaskan."

I nodded. "Guess so. But I bet I could do it."

The old-timer leaned forward and poked a finger at my chest. His handle-bar mustache bristled out at me. "You," he said, "are a husky young gent, right enough. Persistent, too, I reckon, from the way you hiked up that railroad track. But you've got a ways to go." He waved his stick at the stretching distance of trees and tundra. "To get around this country, a feller has to stand up and be his own man—no matter what. That's the only kind ever sticks it out long enough to become a sourdough."

"What's sourdough mean?"

"Word comes from the little ball of fermented dough the early prospectors carried around instead of baking powder. Means a feller who's managed to stick through a couple of Alaska winters, and

aims to stick through a couple dozen more. You could call me a sourdough."

"About The Seventy Mile Kid . . . where is he now?"

"Dunno. There's a lot of country up here, and very few people. Easy to lose track of a man."

When I turned in that night I had a lot to think about. So the legendary Seventy Mile Kid was still around! No matter what Diamond Willow Holmes said, I was going to be a tough Alaskan, too, a sourdough. Some day I'd know more about the mountain The Kid had climbed. Some day I'd explore all of this big country. I guess all young men have such whirling thoughts when they're long on ambition but short on plans.

The delightful days of the Alaskan summer, with their twenty hours of continuous sunshine, convinced me easily that this was the only place to live. When the Alaska Road Commission closed down the camp in October, I decided to head north to see what it was like in Fairbanks. We had had a couple of snow flurries, and the fall rains had begun. In between them, the shortening days were bright and pleasant, but in the mornings I had to break the ice out of the wash-water bucket.

Floyd Ballard couldn't make it. He had had word that his father had been taken ill; he had to go back to the Oregon farm. I knew he hated to go, but he tried to conceal it, while we were waiting at the railroad track. "The hell with this country, Grant," he said. "It's nothing but mosquitoes and high water."

Diamond Willow, who was standing nearby, merely snorted. He already knew why Floyd was going.

The other cat driver was a skinny, earnest fellow named Dick Holmes (no relation to Diamond Willow). He and I teamed up to go to Fairbanks with a man who was making his final run with a Ford stage line over the 250-mile route.

Torrential rains had made the road as slippery as a peeled log—and it was not much wider. We had to pile out and push that flivver over the muddiest places.

"Dick," I said, as we pushed on the mudguards, "I see why they say the best way to travel in Alaska is in the dead of winter, by dog team."

At last we got to the halfway point, a roaring glacial stream known as Gunny sack Creek. This creek had washed out its bridge.

We climbed out and inspected the wreckage. Dick turned to the driver. "We did not mind—much—paying you seventy-five dollars each for this trip. But we didn't contract to push your car through mud and ice water to Fairbanks. Now we'll take back the other half of our fare and travel the rest of the way without pushing anything."

The stage driver saw our point—after all, there were two of us—and pungled up with the \$37.50 apiece. Then we waded out into the turbulent glacier water, carrying our suitcases on our heads. The water was only waist deep, which was lucky for us. A squishing 6-mile hike beyond Gunnysack brought us to a log cabin roadhouse, where the price for a bunk made of poles and covered with spruce boughs was \$2.50, and the same for a sourdough meal. We paid it gladly, although I don't think the proprietor was too glad to have us using his stove to dry our pants.

The next morning the weather cleared, and with our pants dried Dick and I got a ride in another Model T to Fairbanks. Fare, \$37.50 each. Prices on that road were fixed and frozen. We arrived in Fairbanks at 9 p.m., after the fall darkness had come on.

Fairbanks, I found, was much larger than Cordova. It was a six-to-eight street town, set on the flat tundra with the muddy little Chena River wandering along one side. It had some two and three-story buildings. We trudged around, looking without success for a room or a small cabin. The town was full. As we were roaming about, we heard a voice call, "Pearson! Holmes!"

We turned to see a broad-shouldered truck driver we'd known at Chitina, Al Winn, coming toward us with a grin on his face. "You guys looking for a place to bunk?"

"Yes."

"So am I. And if you'll put in with me, I've got the answer."

Al Winn's theory was, if there are no small cabins to rent, rent a large one and get more people to pay the expenses.

It worked. We got a big cabin—well, fairly big, about eighteen by twelve—and four of us moved in for a rent of \$15 a month apiece. There were Dick and I, Al Winn, and a friend of his named Lee Swisher, whom I was to meet again on the trails of McKinley Park.

All of us rounded up jobs, some temporary, none of them too satisfactory. There is a time when life in a frontier town becomes just plain grubby work. At one point, I was working with a gold

dredge outfit, Dick had become a taxi driver, Al was a waiter, and Lee was hauling water to sell to people who didn't own their own wells. Al was the only one who actually griped about his job. "This indoor restaurant work is no good," he stated flatly. "Kills your appetite, and what's worse, I never get out for any hunting or fishing."

One day we found a note from Al on the cabin table. "Have taken the train up to winter trapping country. City life is the bunk. Regards. Al."

That was the last any one heard from Al for months. Then, in February of '26, I got a letter. It was dated "Mt. McKinley National Park," and said, "Grant, you'd better come on up here. I've got a job as a temporary park ranger, and there is another job open. The pay isn't great—\$140 a month, and you buy your own provisions—but the way I've heard you talk, this is the life for you. How about it?"

The gold dredge work had shut down till spring. Meanwhile, I had had word that my mother was in the state hospital back in Michigan with tuberculosis; my two brothers and I had each promised to send her fifty dollars a month. Al's proposition looked like the best way for me to hold up my end. Also, I told myself, I would be getting closer to that big mountain.

When I swung off the train at McKinley Park station, Al was there to meet me; he took me over to a log cabin with "Headquarters" on it, to meet the Park Superintendent, and I found myself applying for a job from the one man I never thought I'd actually meet—Harry Karstens, The Seventy Mile Kid.

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4



A Legend Comes Alive

SITTING BEHIND THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK, his ranger's Stetson pushed back on his forehead, was a thin, wiry man with an air of carefully suppressed energy. He had the special squint-lines around the eyes that come from years of looking far distances. A trace of gray at the temples. High cheek bones; maybe a fellow Scandinavian. In one motion he swung to his feet and thrust out a hand. He stood close to six feet.

"You're Grant Pearson. Howdy, Grant."

"Howdy, Kid—er, sir."

I've never heard a laugh as hearty as the one that filled that headquarters cabin.

"I've been called a lot of things, but damned if anyone ever tried 'sir'! Sit down, Grant. People 'round here call me Harry. Al, you better go give the dogs their fish."

It was as easy and casual as that. Someone I'd thought of since boyhood as legendary had come to life as a man like other men. And in the next few minutes I realized that Harry Karstens was a man who meant business, and wanted no mistake by any of his employees on that subject.

"Al tells me he thinks you can take care of yourself in the wild country."

"Well, I've done it often enough."

"Good. You'll get a chance to prove it. There's two feet of snow on the ground now. Be another foot before the month's out. After you get the hang of things around here, I'll send you out on a patrol. First with another ranger, then alone. You're hired as a Temporary Ranger, and what that word "temporary" means is, you're on trial."

He opened a desk drawer and handed me a mimeographed sheet. The heading said, "National Park Service. Mt. McKinley National Park."

"That's the outfit you're working for, Grant. Read it over. There's one word in there you ought to know all about. 'Conservation.' Tells you what this whole shebang is for."

He stood up and pointed out the window to another cabin under the snow-piled spruces. "You'll bunk over there. Al will show you where to put your stuff. Only one thing about that cabin. The law protects the wild animals in the park" I caught a twinkle in his eye. "And the squirrels know it. Don't leave anything shiny around."

After I'd got myself settled, bed roll spread out and other equipment stashed on a box that served as a bureau, I sat on my bunk to read the sheet Harry Karstens had given me. "A National Park," it began solemnly, "is an area with certain scenic, biological or other natural features, to be kept in as natural a condition as possible for this and all future generations."

I began to get a glimmering of what my job was to be. I was one of the custodians of the place, it was up to me, not to civilize this wilderness, but actually to defend it against the encroachments of civilization. This was a new idea. The more I thought about it, the more it seemed like a good one. I'd seen plenty of scenic areas taken over by commercial civilizers—from hot dog stands to timber slashings, some of which I'd helped to make.

"This conservation principle," the sheet continued, "applies not only to plants and trees and bare rocks, but to wild life as well, which is why every national park is a game refuge. Fishing is permitted, but no wild animal or bird may be killed or molested."

I had to chew on that one. I'd always figured that animals grew to be killed and used for food. If I were to go around preventing this, I'd have to become a kind of policeman, which was something I hadn't counted on. "Still," I said to myself, "if you're going to preserve a place, I suppose the animals have to be preserved, too." But it wasn't until a considerable time later that I came to actually believe it, and to realize how much enjoyment visitors—and I too, I found to my surprise—would get out of just *seeing* wild animals as they went unconcernedly about their animal business in their

own wild haunts. It takes a little time to make a complete conservationist out of a free-wheeling backwoodsman.

"Mt. McKinley National Park," the sheet went on, "lies on the north slopes of the Alaska Range, and includes Mt. McKinley, 20,320 feet high, the highest peak in North America, the park contains 2,645 square miles, and is 30 to 35 miles wide, north to south, and 90 miles long, east to west."

Ninety miles long! I hadn't realized I was going to be taking care of so huge an area. (Six years later, 385 more square miles were tacked on, taking in beautiful Wonder Lake on the west, and going east two miles to the Nenana River, a natural wildlife boundary. But by that time I had become used to patrolling eye-filling distances.)

Of course, that description of the park was just the bare bones of what I later learned about this spectacular area where I was to spend twenty-eight strenuous years. But even in the first few days at headquarters I began to feel the spell of the great park. The days were short and the sun was visible for only a few minutes because the crags of the Alaska Range thrust up high to the south, hemming in little Hines Creek valley where park headquarters was located. At night it was clear, and the snow made it almost as light as day. The Northern Lights played in great fans of color from chalk white to deep gold. Sound travelled a great distance; I could hear a moose walking through the woods, and the overflowing creek water hitting bitter cold ice gave off reports like a high-powered rifle. There were lonesome barren spaces, too, beyond the woods; I did not know then how huge they were.

I also had yet to learn that in this land each of the seasons seemed to be in competition to rock one's senses. Most of McKinley Park is above timberline, which at this latitude is 2,500 feet; when the snows go away and the alpine mosses come out in glowing greens, it is like roaming for miles over a giant fairway. I believe there is no place else in the world where so complete a change is made so swiftly. In no time spring ripens into the lush colors of summer—brush strokes of bright yellows and blues in the green above timberline, pinkish-purple splashes of fireweed in the timbered bottomlands, tiny deep-blue lakes where ducks herd their families and beavers set up businesslike ripples. Even the rocks sparkle with a

profusion of colors. Over all this rise the white snow peaks of the Alaska Range and the awesome sheer thrust of McKinley. Autumn is scarlet and amber, and all too short. Soon the snow begins to fall in soft flurries around a ranger's cabin, the wind whistles in deep tones around the eaves; and strangely enough, this too is a time of light and color. Not only the Aurora Borealis flinging out its tinted veils—there are blue-white miracles of moonlight on ice and snow; even the wan winter sunlight warms the somber greens and grays of tree and rock to gentle pastel life.

I imagine that twenty years before, Harry Karstens had fallen in love with the McKinley country in the same way. He had spent a year acting as guide for a famous hunter-naturalist from the States, Charles Sheldon of New York, who wanted to study Dall mountain sheep and bring back trophies. In the region that is now the center of the park, east and north of Mt. McKinley, Sheldon and Karstens found a huge population of wild life—not only mountain sheep, but grizzlies, moose, caribou, many species of smaller animals and birds, all of which Sheldon faithfully recorded. Here too, when Sheldon and Karstens were camping in the snow near the north face of McKinley, was born the idea of making this wild area into a national park. I don't know who thought of it first. Maybe it was a joint inspiration. Sheldon, whose literary style had a nineteenth-century flourish, wrote in the expedition's log:

"When Denali National Park shall be made easy of access, with accommodations and facilities for travel, as it surely will be, it is not difficult to anticipate the enjoyment and inspiration visitors will receive."

This was the beginning, for Naturalist Sheldon, of a year-after-year fight to get a bill through Congress. Some Alaska mining men fought it; but finally a compromise was worked out allowing prospecting and mining in the park, and the bill was passed on February 24, 1917. It was personally taken by Charles Sheldon to the White House, where Woodrow Wilson signed it and presented Sheldon with the pen he had used.

There was one hitch. No funds had been provided. This defect was remedied, with what might be called all deliberate speed, in 1921. Undoubtedly at Charles Sheldon's suggestion, Harry Karstens was appointed to the newly-created job of Park Superintendent, and began to figure out what could be done to ride herd on this

vast area with its abundant temptations for poaching hunters. He also laid plans to take care of visitors, when the Alaska Railroad would be completed in 1923 and tourists could get to the park boundary without hiking there.

When I got off the train at McKinley Park station in February, '26, Harry Karstens had his plans well under way. He had managed to get money to hire three more rangers and a clerk; he had staked out a summer trail of 92 miles, the length of the park, with shelter tents at day's-hike intervals; he had opened up a tourist camp on high ground twelve miles out on this trail, the first place a visitor could get a view of Mt. McKinley itself. Summer tourists could ride the twelve miles by saddle horse, or walk. There were also about ten miles of wagon road, and a wagon to haul supplies.

"But," Al Winn told me, "all that is summer activity. In winter the boss figures our job is to get out and patrol the whole doggone park, keeping a mean eye out for poachers. He does a lot of it himself. I think that's what he likes most, prowling around out in the wild country."

"Kind of a throw-back to the days when he was The Seventy Mile Kid?"

"Guess so. But believe me, he demands a lot of a fellow along those lines. I've been out with him a couple of times. He figures it's the way to tell whether man is fit for the job. You have to keep humping, and you have to be smart. Ever handle a dog team?"

"Uh . . . no."

That was a test I'd never figured on. A dog team! Sure, I'd read about them. But could I operate one? Well, here I was, up in the Far North, the glamorous land of malemutes and sourdoughs, and faced with the probability of having to holler "Mush!" at a bunch of critters whose ideas on the subject of sled pulling I had no notion of.

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5



Cheechako Ranger

THE NEXT FEW DAYS I chopped wood, re-chinked cabins, and did other winter chores—including feeding the sled dogs, figuring that was the best way to get on their good side.

Malemutes and huskies—we had both—get fed once a day, generally just before dark. Their dinner consists of about a pound and a half of smoked, frozen fish, usually sockeye salmon.

As I approached the dog kennels that first time with my bundle of fish, those dogs set up a tremendous clamor—a series of yelping howls that made me think that if they didn't get their fish pronto, they'd get me. I was glad to see they were all on six-foot chain tethers, and didn't mind in the least having their dinner tossed to them.

Like most newcomers, I had heard, and believed, that sled dogs were almost uncontrollably vicious. "A man doesn't dare fall down among his dogs," went the gruesome tale. "They'd be on him in an instant."

Next day, at Al Winn's none-too-gentle urging, I approached somewhat gingerly a large gray-and-black malemute, the leader of a team. He had the slant eyes of a wolf, and he watched me closely as I sidled up to him. I put out a cautious hand. As I touched his head, his plumed tail waved once, gracefully, in courteous acknowledgment. That was all. I felt foolish. And as the experience was repeated with the other dogs, I also began to feel that perhaps running one of these dog teams was going to be easy, after all.

One evening Harry Karstens dropped in on our cabin as Al and I were firing up the stove to cook our supper of bacon, beans, sourdough biscuits and canned tomatoes. "I want you two to go out tomorrow," he said, "on a patrol of the park boundary between the

Savage and the Sanctuary Rivers. Those two rivers, and the ten mile stretch between 'em, are kind of a highway for poachers—easiest way to get to the best game areas in the park. Even if you don't see any poachers, make a wildlife count."

He looked thoughtfully at Al Winn, who was mixing the biscuit dough. "Al, you've been out with me before, and know a little about travelling 'round. But this time, you're going out with a man who's even more of a cheechako than you are." He turned to me. "Grant, the ranger you are replacing wasn't fit for this kind of job. I sent him out on a patrol—perfectly simple trip—and he came staggering back after three days, almost starved. He hadn't been able to cook any of his grub—said he couldn't find any water that wasn't frozen to ice, and he never did find the cabin with a stove in it that I'd sent him to. Now, this fellow had a trail axe and could have cut some dry wood; he had a camper's pot and could have melted snow. What he didn't have was any sense. Lucky for him the weather was warm, about zero, so he didn't get frostbite."

I thought to myself, "About zero, eh? Warm!"

"This trip you're making isn't tough," he continued. "However, it's one of the kind we have to use to separate the men from the boys. Take a seven-dog team, and pack a week's supplies on your sled." He handed us a map he had drawn showing where he wanted us to go.

Both the Savage and the Sanctuary flowed north from the Alaska Range—when they weren't frozen. We were to go west ten miles from headquarters to the Savage, then down it to the north another nine or ten miles to the park's north boundary, and west along the boundary to the Sanctuary. Al and I studied the route. It looked easy.

After Harry Karstens left I asked Al, "What's a cheechako?"

"It's an Alaskan Indian word. Means tenderfoot. Harry isn't exactly diplomatic, is he?"

Next daylight, after we'd loaded the 8-foot sled, Harry Karstens helped us hitch up the team. My part consisted in doing exactly what I was told with no clear idea of what it was about. Those dogs surprised me again; they actually seemed eager to get into their harness. The superintendent gave us a parting remark: "Take it easy with the dogs."

This advice was simple to take. In fact, we couldn't help our-

selves. The dogs had not been used recently, and were in poor condition; the trail had drifted over with soft snow, making the pulling extra hard; and after a time some of the dogs held back, stopping the entire team while they chewed ice balls out from between their toes. (I found out later that these dogs' foot hair had not been trimmed as it should have been.) We had to stop several times to adjust chafing harness. The dogs had a clear and simple way of speaking their minds when a strap was rubbing: they would look over their shoulders and try to lick the spot, to let us know where the trouble was.

It took us until noon that first day to reach the relief cabin on the Savage, only ten miles out. Most of the time we were plodding along on the open tundra; its great treeless stretches looking to me as hospitable as a desert. At the cabin, in a small spruce grove, we ate a cold lunch of flapjack-and-bacon sandwiches, then hitched up again. Half an hour after Al had yelled "Mush!" we discovered that the trail—the only way we could get through to the north boundary—involved travelling down a narrow two-mile canyon the Savage River had cut through the foothills. (These foothills, by the way, are steep, high and jagged; any place outside Alaska they would be called mountains and looked on with respect.) In places the canyon sides were sheer rock walls, the water rushing through at high speed almost from wall to wall. The canyon bottom was full of huge boulders, ice falls and open water. There was very little snow in the canyon, which I never thought would be a disadvantage, but it certainly was. Controlling a sled with seven dogs hitched to it was impossible.

"What do we do now?" I asked.

"We go through on foot by ourselves, I guess, and pack our grub and bed rolls on our backs." Al peered gloomily down the canyon, then straightened up, grinning.

"No, we don't! Here's where we use a trick Harry taught me. We'll make pack mules out of two of our dogs."

"Huh? And leave the rest of the team?"

"Yes. I'll show you. Let's back-track." Al swung the team around. Back at the cabin he dug out of our supplies a hand sewing outfit and some heavy canvas. "This," he said, "will be pack-sacks, tailored to order."

Packing a dog is different from packing a horse. You have to use

a soft sack; a hard pack-saddle rig would cause sores. We sewed up two canvas sacks about thirty inches long and twelve inches wide, sewing both ends shut then folding them widthwise through the middle and cutting a slit through one layer of canvas along the fold. We then cut several canvas strips two inches wide to use as pack cinches. All this took about two hours, by which time, as Al had figured, the winter darkness was setting in. We gave the dogs their fish and holed up for the night.

Al said next morning, "These packs will fit our two largest dogs. Harry told me a dog can pack about twenty pounds. You load your sack through the middle slit, half on each side so it'll balance. When they're packed I'll show you how to rig the cinches."

With the pack-sacks on the backs of the two dogs, who seemed to take it all as a matter of course, Al put one strip of canvas under the dog's belly and around the pack. I followed suit. This held the load from moving sideways. He tied another strip to one side of the pack, brought it across the dog's chest and back to the other side. This kept the pack from sliding back. A third cinch tied to the rear of the pack went around the dog's hindquarters, keeping the pack from sliding forward. When we got all that done I figured those two packs were on about as securely as the dogs' own hides.

We tied up the other dogs carefully, left them feed for several days, enough to last until we would get back, and piled up snow around them. An Alaska sled dog learns early to eat snow in winter, as in most places there is no running water.

We started down the Savage again, each of us leading a dog. As we got into the canyon we turned the dogs loose to follow us their own way. There were numerous herds of Dall mountain sheep grazing above us on the wind-exposed dry grass along the mountain sides; the dogs wanted to take off after them.

"Just slap those mutts alongside the ear," Al said. "That'll take their minds off the sheep." We did, and after that the dogs merely looked at the sheep and whined.

Just below the mouth of the canyon, which we negotiated easily, we were supposed to pick up the trail to a ranger cabin located where Ewe Creek fed into the Savage. We tied the dogs to some willows while we hunted around until we found the trail blazes. This gave the dogs a rest, which turned out to be a mistake.

Our animals were following behind us in solemn and business-

like fashion when a rabbit ran across the trail just ahead. Away went the dogs after Mr. Rabbit, packs and all. "Whoa!" Al yelled, for all the good it would do.

One dog ran into a tree and his pack tore open. Pieces of our cooking outfit fell out. We followed that dog's tracks and found most of our supplies, spread over a quarter mile radius. The other dog had disappeared completely.

"This is serious," Al groaned. "That other fellow has my new seventy-five dollar sleeping bag on his back. Eiderdown!"

When we found that other dog he was sitting on his haunches with no pack on at all, and not the least concerned. When Al cursed him out, he didn't even look sheepish. It took a half-hour hunt to turn up his pack—with sleeping bag undamaged. I decided I was a bit off in thinking a pack-sack could be made to fit a dog's hide as well as if it had grown there.

Our disgust at the shambles made of our equipment was in no sense improved when we opened the door of the Ewe Creek cabin. Its lumpy dirt floor was speckled with small-animal droppings. Its tin stove was riddled with holes. Its pots and pans were red with rust. There were squirrels' nests everywhere. This was to be my home for the next three days.

"What a mess!" I muttered.

"Well, the roof's still on."

It took two hours to clean out the joint. The ranger stew (pemmican and dried potatoes) which we cooked on the cabin stove turned out okay, but the biscuits we baked in the stovepipe oven were burnt on the outside and doughy in the middle. That stove was by nature either too hot or too cold.

Aside from its exceptionally ornery stove, this cabin was a typical sourdough habitation . . . about fourteen by eighteen feet, walls of spruce logs, roofed with poles and layers of moss and dirt, cabin sides between the logs stuffed with moss to keep wind, rain and snow from filtering in and heat from filtering out. Two bunks of the old bedstead type were built along the rear wall. We threw out the hay in them and treated ourselves to freshly-cut mattresses of springy dried redtop grass. Such bunks can be plenty inviting after a day on the trail.

Next morning Al said, "Now we're here—let's get on with counting the wildlife, as Harry told us." I said nothing. It seemed crazy

to try to count wild animals who wouldn't stand still to be counted. We started off at random across the tundra. Tundra-walking without a trail, I found out, can be a slow and tedious job. You have to go over or around grass-and-bush-tufted hummocks, and where the snow has not packed in, wade through tightly growing dwarf willows, blueberry and other tough foot-high bushes.

As far as snowshoe rabbits went, I was right. There must have been thousands of the little white fellows. All the small cottonwood trees were peeled of their bark as high as the rabbits could reach. (Our report on them led to the conclusion that they had bred to the saturation point. Two years later a disease broke out among the over-populated and under-nourished animals; they almost all died off. This is nature's violent way of keeping things in balance.)

To my surprise, we were able to count the larger animals quite easily. Most of McKinley Park is open country, tundra or above-timber-line alpine meadows; even in the timbered bottom lands of creeks and rivers, the trees grow in widely separated groves, so we could spot our census subjects from a long way off. In two days of patrolling we counted around 120 Dall sheep, using binoculars to locate them high up on the windswept ridges; about four hundred caribou, dotted in small bands about the landscape; sixty-two coveys of ptarmigan . . . white in winter with black tails, about ten to a covey . . . most of which startled us by taking to the air with a loud beat of wings just as we walked up to them. A cow moose and two yearlings; probably there was a bull around somewhere.

"Those critters are the hardest of all to spot," Al said. "I know, I've hunted 'em. They browse in thick groves of willow or spruce, and you sometimes don't see them until you're looking right up their ugly noses."

No poachers spotted either, for which fact I was grateful because by now I was beginning to look upon all these animals I'd been counting as my own special wards, and not to be tampered with by strangers.

It was snowing a bit the third day, and warmer, as we loaded up our dogs again, this time keeping them firmly on leash. We went down the Savage until we sighted the peeled wooden post that marked the park boundary; here we cut due west along the invis-

ible boundary line. The snow had let up by the time we made it to the Sanctuary River.

We struck the river bank at the mouth of Sanctuary Canyon, which we'd heard was particularly tough to get through . . . steep rock walls, and many places, as on the Savage, where the water had not frozen.

The first mile was smooth travelling. Then we came around a bend and saw a stretch of open, tumbling water for several hundred feet. No way around it.

"Now what?"

"We back-track and take to the mountainside like a sheep."

The slope was too steep for pack-laden dogs to negotiate. We had to carry their packs over the bad stretches, leaving them to follow us as best they could. We were almost past the worst stretch when one of the dogs slipped, and slid all the way down to the river, yelping. A few feet of shore ice saved him from the water, but I had to scramble down and practically carry him back up. It took us four hours to make the five miles through that canyon.

As the valley opened out and the river became frozen over again, we saw a dog team crossing the ice in the distance.

"A poacher!" I said to Al.

Al squinted at the team and its driver hanging onto the gee-pole. "Nope. That's Fritz Nyberg, the chief ranger. He only poaches flapjacks."

At our long halloo he pulled up and waited.

"Country sure is getting populated," Ranger Nyberg grinned as we came up with our dogs on their leashes, "when folks take to walking their dogs right on the tundra."

"We had canyon trouble," Al said.

"I'll bet. It's too warm to freeze in those chutes. Only around zero."

I hadn't realized it was that cold; but this did not seem to be the time to mention it. Fritz had come from the Toklat River ranger cabin that morning, a distance of thirty-four miles over two passes; he calmly remarked that he intended to go on to headquarters that day, another twenty miles. His team was a beauty—seven brothers, all light red.

"How long have you been out there?" I asked.

"Three months. I'm going back for more supplies."

Three months by himself, out on those white barrens! I'd always thought of myself as somewhat of a loner, but this was taking your privacy in large helpings. Maybe it was an assignment only a Chief Ranger had to take.

Fritz started up his team and grabbed hold of the gee-pole—the four-foot long guide pole on the right side of a sled. As his dogs began to make the snow fly, I said to Al, "That guy doesn't seem the least bit concerned about going right out there again after he gets his supplies. Doesn't he ever get lonesome?"

"Well, from the beginnings of that second chin he's sporting, I gather Fritz lives pretty well. He'll be back in the spring."

We followed the chief ranger's trail for a mile west, to the Sanctuary River cabin. It was considerably different from the one we'd been living in at Ewe Creek. It had been built only four months ago. It was made of logs peeled and hewed on three sides, and chinked with oakum. I looked inside. There was a big iron range, plenty of cooking utensils, dishes, two spring cots and mattresses, and it had a wall-to-wall plank floor.

I turned around and said, "Welcome to the Waldorf!"

Al looked in and shook his head. "This luxury is going to spoil us. Good thing we're only here for one night. Chef, heat me up some ice water."

Next morning we followed Fritz Nyberg's sled-track back toward the Savage River where we had left our dogs. As we topped the divide between the Sanctuary and the Savage we had a clear view of the marching peaks of the Alaska Range. For the first time I saw Mount McKinley in all its massive splendor, practically close-up. It was still over fifty miles away by air line, but it looked close enough to reach in a short day's stroll.

Our dogs welcomed us with a chorus of happy howls when we reached the Savage River cabin at noon. They still had fish enough for another day, which we loaded onto the sled, hitched up, and those eager animals took us the ten miles back to headquarters in little more than two hours. We achieved real racing speed once when the dogs spotted a few caribou ahead, and again when the animals at headquarters heard us and sent yelping greetings. I felt like yelping myself. I was just as happy as those dogs of ours to get back home with my first job, full of so many things I hadn't expected, finally done.



Into Sourdough

WHEN WE PULLED UP AT HEADQUARTERS Harry Karstens was waiting for us. "I heard you two came through okay," he said. "Fine. Tomorrow will be a holiday for you. Rest up, do what you please but don't do anything harder than washing your clothes, which," he looked us over, smiling, "maybe you'd better do first."

I was glad of the break, and of the light round of chores in the next few days. I had some stock-taking to do. What, exactly, was I doing in this part of Alaska? And did I want to keep on doing it? I'd heard they were still sluicing gold over in the Klondike. Moreover, McKinley was like no other National Park I'd ever heard of. This park was largely barren of forest . . . and it was in the trees that I'd grown up and learned to make my living.

I hadn't known that the duties of a Ranger, even a Temporary Ranger, were so wide and varied. I wondered if this particular job was cut out for me, and if I was cut out for the job. I was still a cheechako, all right; but I figured I had learned almost as much wilderness lore on that first trip out to the Sanctuary as I had picked up in a year of ordinary outdoor experience.

I guess that was what really decided me—I wanted to learn all there was to know about this strange, wild country.

One afternoon I was swinging an axe at the woodpile when Harry Karstens came by and told me to get together enough grub in my pack to last ten days. "I'm sending you out alone tomorrow, Grant, on a snowshoe patrol. I want to see how you operate on your own, without even dogs. I want you to go to the Windy Creek ranger cabin on the southeast boundary. This means going up over the Alaska Range by way of Riley Creek Pass. Here."

He handed me a map he had drawn. "The trail goes almost due

south, thirty-two miles to the Windy Creek cabin. Seven miles from headquarters—where that X is—is an old trapper's cabin. That'll do for the first night, unless you want to go on up Riley Creek and camp under a tree at the last timber. You'll make it easy to Windy Creek next day."

Karstens looked at me a moment, thinking. "Grant, this will be a trial trip, a real test for you. But don't worry about it. You'll make it if you use your head." As Al Winn had said, Harry Karstens was sometimes not exactly diplomatic.

I've told you about the beginning of that trip, and how I finally bumped into the Windy Creek cabin in the pitch dark, thus learning the first lesson of a good outdoors man—never get too ambitious on the trail.

Getting a fire started in that icy cabin that night was my first job. It wasn't late, of course, even though it was full dark. Fortunately, the last occupant of the cabin had followed the sourdough rule and left plenty of wood. I found a pail and started down to the creek for water—only to find myself immediately floundering around in the soft, deep snow. I filled my pail with some of the stuff and scrambled back into the cabin. After that I merely opened the door and scooped up a handful of snow until I had enough melted. Because of the consistency of that snow, it took about twelve pailfuls to make one pailful of water. I poured some water into one of the cabin's pots, dumped in a generous serving of beans, and sat down to listen to the appetizing (to me) sound of beans rattling around in a pot as they boiled. After two hours I judged the beans were about done, and made myself a batch of bannocks, with flour, baking powder, dried eggs, salt and water, cooked slowly in hot grease. I also boiled up a pot of coffee. The bannocks and coffee were fine, but the beans had a peculiar woody flavor. I almost fell asleep at the table and didn't bother to wash the dishes.

I woke up at ten o'clock the next morning. After I had started the fire, I picked up the pail to pour water for coffee, and noticed some little balls floating on the surface. I went out to where I had scooped the snow the night before; sure enough, rabbit droppings. The ground was covered with them. I threw out the rest of the woody-tasting beans.

This cabin was to be my personal winter resort for the next nine days, so I decided to fix it up a bit—particularly since it was so cold

inside I had to wear my cap and heavy coat all the time. I dug moss for chinking from under the snow and hung it over the fire to dry out. It was still around thirty below outside, but after a while the upper regions of the cabin got warm enough for the snow on the roof to begin to thaw. I found this out when water began to leak down inside; I went out and shovelled the snow off the roof. When my moss had dried out, I chinked the oversize peep-holes between the logs. Finally, it became warm enough in that cabin so I could take off my hat and coat. The next few days I spent sawing wood and recutting blazes along the boundary line at the southeast corner of the park, where I saw lots of game—hundreds of sheep on the mountainsides, rabbits everywhere, traces of otter and mink along the creek.

While I was blazing the trail along the park boundary to the east of the cabin, I noticed what looked like smoke coming out of a small thicket on the banks of the stream. "A poacher," I said to myself. Prime mink and otter pelts were bringing fancy prices. I crept stealthily up on that thicket, finding my determination to protect the little animals boiling up inside me. I no longer had any qualms about being a policeman; that poacher would have a rough time from me.

As I drew nearer I was met by strong fumes of sulphur. The stream that had been iced over a few yards back showed open water. Then it dawned on me that what I was seeing was steam. I had come on one of several mineral springs in the locality. "Too bad, Grant," I said. "No chance to be a hero here." I went back rather sheepishly to the mundane task of finishing the boundary blazes.

At the end of nine days I had criss-crossed that Windy Creek country thoroughly, keeping a sharp eye out for wildlife and for signs of illicit traps. I was just packing up to leave when I heard someone outside holler "Whoa!" It was Al Winn, with a dog team.

"I brought you a week's more supplies," Al said, kicking off his snowshoes at the door. "Harry wants you to stay on here that much longer. Trapping season's about over, but there's always someone trying for a last pelt. You know the trading post at Cantwell?"

"I've seen it on the map. 'Bout five miles southeast."

"Be a good idea if you showed up there. Buy some tobacco or something. Harry says that just the fact there's a ranger around,

when the fur hunters hear of it, will discourage them from setting their traps on the wrong side of the boundary."

"Good. I'd rather scare 'em than arrest 'em."

We unloaded the supplies, and since we had come to be a pretty good cooking team, we treated ourselves to something fancy in the way of supper—thick-cut bacon, sourdough bread, coffee, rice pudding made with dried eggs, canned milk, rice and sugar, and plenty of raisins. Next morning Al took off for headquarters and I set out on my mission as bogey-man to fur trappers.

The settlement of Cantwell consisted of about twenty log cabins scattered about haphazardly in the sparse trees near the railroad, plus three larger cabins joined together, which were hotel, cook-house and trading post. This layout was run by John Carlson, a friendly, weathered Alaskan who had come north during the early gold stampedes. He had set up his trading post at a strategic point. It was not only in the heart of good trapping country, it was the start of the sixty-mile trail from the railroad to the Valdez Creek mining country. Prospectors and trappers alike outfitted themselves at Cantwell.

Inside Carlson's store I saw thousands of dollars worth of furs: fox, lynx, beaver, mink, otter, grizzly, even one cream-white polar bear pelt Carlson had taken in a trade. I also saw half a dozen early-starting Valdez Creek miners. They were a happy-go-lucky bunch, looking forward to hitting it rich for sure that summer.

They had begun a poker game at a table under a hanging kerosene lamp, and invited me to join, which I did. The game lasted far into the night—I'd decided to stay overnight at Carlson's bunk-house hotel anyway—and when it was over I had managed to add seventeen dollars to my net assets, a bonus in line of duty I hadn't counted on. Alaskans, especially prospectors, take the wildest poker chances you ever saw.

I met no trappers to impress with my presence, either at Cantwell or for the rest of my stay on Windy Creek. When I finally slung my pack on my back it was lighter by ten days' grub, and with Al's well-packed sled trail to follow, I swung along over those thirty-two miles back to headquarters in ten hours, feeling thoroughly competent to handle myself as a Ranger (Temporary) should.

This was the start of a whole series of lone-hand expeditions. The next one involved a contraption new to me—a Yukon sled.

This is the light sled, used by the early prospectors when dogs were scarce, eight feet long, sixteen inches wide, built to be hauled by one man making like a dog team. I was going out to build a board floor on that beat-up Ewe Creek cabin; I piled personal stuff and lumber on the sled, to the amount of 150 pounds, said "Mush!" to myself and started off. At Fritz Nyberg's suggestion I had made a pair of home-made crampons—steel-hinged frames fitting the soles of shoes, with spikes half an inch to an inch long to keep a man from skidding on ice. With these gadgets I walked sure-footedly down the forbidding glare ice of the now-frozen Savage River, dumped the lumber and chased out the squirrels from that cabin. I laid the floor and built a few needful shelves, then took off on an expedition of my own, fifteen miles across the tundra hummocks to the town of Healy on the railroad. There I got more supplies, rather than going back to headquarters for them over a trail I already knew.

After I got the Yukon sled back to headquarters I rambled around on a few short expeditions, following Harry Karstens' orders: "Travel where you want, Grant—just keep in or near the park boundaries." I bisected the east end of the park, travelling from north to south up the Sanctuary and over the Alaska Range divide to Windy Creek. On this hike I learned that caribou, at times, can be friendly critters who don't mind doing a human good turn.

I had just topped the divide when a babiche broke. This is the rawhide thong that is woven back and forth to form the webbing of snowshoes. I figured I was in for a rough time trying to fix that strap without freezing my fingers, when I saw a herd of several hundred caribou come around the mountain shoulder just ahead of me. They saw me at the same time, and began heading down the pass. They were going in the same direction I was—down Windy Creek. All I had to do was go a few hundred feet, then take off my snowshoes and walk along on the hard-packed trail left by these obliging animals.

When I got back to headquarters I made up my mind my next trip was going to be more ambitious. By this time I had standardized my gear: grub for six days, sleeping bag, and first-aid kit made up a fifty-pound pack. I also carried a .22 rifle, hand axe, binoculars

and camera. With snowshoes on my feet, I would have made a dandy exhibit in the window of a sporting goods store.

The Toklat country was new to me, further west than I'd ever been before; so I headed out for it, 45 miles over the tundra to the Toklat River. The constantly nearer views I kept getting of McKinley's summit were more and more exciting. I looked up at those twin peaks and said, "You wait! I'll be up there yet." I almost persuaded myself that this time I wasn't just boasting. The Toklat valley, flat on the bottom and steep on the sides, cut off my view of the mountain; but it was a wonderful place to count game, which I now thoroughly enjoyed doing—even making a stab at counting rabbits.

There is a bell-shaped blue flower called Pasque that grows alongside melting snow in the park, and usually ushers in springtime. I was observing this piece of park flora at headquarters, when Harry Karstens came up beside me. "It's the first of May," he said, "and I've used up all the money for temporary ranger's wages. But, if you want to, you can work on fixing up the summer trail out to the head of Savage River. Job will last maybe six weeks. First of July I want you as a permanent ranger. How about it?"

I said "Sure!"

I wasn't going to leave this country just when spring was getting ready to break; so I became a trail builder. I was the entire crew, and the crew was quartered in an old trail tent near the scene of operations with mattock, shovel and an occasional stick of dynamite. Evenings, I amused myself watching the mountain sheep, caribou, whistling marmots and other animals near the tent. Every night I heard a fox barking outside its den nearby. I had packed in some books from headquarters, and during these long daylight evenings I read up thoroughly on the history of this wild Denali region. Once, as I was drifting off to sleep, I got the idea I was back in school. Five miles away, in the superintendent's office, was the principal; but there weren't any teachers. I sat up at the teacher's desk and taught myself.

Altogether, this was a good time for me. I was growing to love this country with its clear open spaces for far seeing and easy travelling; and I had just got some good news from home: my mother had recovered and left the hospital. (She was to live thirty-two more active, happy years.)

Sooner than I expected, my job as permanent ranger came through. Al Winn had decided he'd had enough of rangers, and had gone back to Fairbanks; I took his place and pay (fifteen dollars a month more), and started in the summer job of building much-needed new cabins around headquarters. In August, as we were putting the last moss and dirt on a cabin roof, Fritz Nyberg said to me, "Grant, tomorrow you better get together some supplies. I'm taking you and some pack horses out to the McKinley River. That's thirty-six miles west of the Toklat. I'll leave you there to build a cabin like this one."

"Fine. I'd better get enough stuff for three weeks."

"Get enough for four months."

"Huh? Four months?"

"Yes. You're going to be on duty out there until freeze-up."

So such long-term solo jobs weren't just for the Chief Ranger. If Fritz saw from my face what I was thinking, he didn't let on.

That night, thinking it over, I was surprised to find I didn't really mind the prospect. "This proves it," I thought to myself. "You're no longer a cheechako. Like it or not, Grant, you're about to become a sourdough."

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7



Miles-Away Neighbors

NEXT DAY WE LOADED UP FOUR PACK HORSES with 200 pounds of supplies apiece, including building tools and mail for the scattering of miners and trappers in the wide region around the McKinley River.

I was leading a sled dog I had talked Fritz Nyberg into letting me take along for company. This dog was a friendly black-and-white malemute, and he had not been exercised for months; he was so fat he almost waddled. We were soon left behind, as pack horses have to be kept at a good pace for any kind of efficient travel. When I saw we were outdistanced by a couple of miles, I turned my panting companion loose. "Beat it!" I said, pointing back down the trail. Fatso hesitated a moment, then got the idea; he turned around and waddled back toward home and the easy life.

Fritz and the horses were out of sight and remained so for the next fifteen miles, in spite of all my hiking efforts. At the Teklanika River, four miles beyond the Sanctuary, I went into a prospector's tumble-down cabin and flopped onto the bunk for a short rest. When I woke up it was three in the morning. I took off in a hurry. It was plenty light enough to travel. "Fine thing!" I thought disgustedly. "Ranger falls asleep on the job."

The relief tent at Igloo Creek loomed up after seven gravel-scrambling miles up the Teklanika river bed. ("Teklanika" means "much river bed little river," and those Indians knew what they were talking about.)

Fritz was still asleep in the tent. I looked over the grub he had organized for a quick breakfast. I hadn't eaten since noon the day before.

Either the slap of my flapjacks in the pan, or the smell of the cof-

fee I'd set on the fire woke up the Chief Ranger. He seemed quite willing to overlook my tardy arrival as long as there was plenty of flapjack batter.

Fritz was a pleasant, easy-going fellow, hard to ruffle, doing his job quietly and efficiently—including making sure he got enough food to keep up his strength. He loved to tell stories, and was always giving people new to the country little tips on the best ways to do things.

"Grant," he said after breakfast, "before we go on, I want to show you an example of how not to build a cabin in this country. Come over here a piece." I followed him through the scattered trees to a cabin on the banks of the creek. It had a steeply-pitched roof, with only the poles in place. I guessed the roof hadn't been finished; then I noticed, on the ground below each side of the roof, two long piles of mud and moss.

"That cabin was built by California mountain men," Fritz said. "They made the roof steep so the snow would slide off. Then they heard you had to pack an Alaska cabin roof with mud and moss, to keep the warmth in. So they did."

"Then, I suppose, they went back to California?"

"Yes. And a good thing for them. But we can fix that job. The rest of the construction is sound."

We took the roof-poles off, cut the gable ends lower and put the poles back on a gentler slant, covering them with a fresh supply of moss and dirt. We chinked the walls with moss and carried coarse sand up from the creek bed to make a smooth cabin floor. We were by then so pleased with our handiwork that we built two double bunks, a table, several shelves and a cupboard.

"There!" said Fritz after four days of this kind of home renovation; "that's a cabin the Park Service doesn't have to be ashamed of." I saw what Fritz had been getting at and was grateful for the informal lesson in architecture.

West from Igloo Creek the trail took us above timberline into mossy alpine meadows; fireweed and white-tufted Alaska cotton gave way to broad sweeps of blue alpine forget-me-nots, yellow dryas and arctic poppies, purple alpine saxifrage—great splashes of color which, as we ascended into Polychrome Pass, were augmented by cliffs brilliantly streaked with ochre, brick red and slate

blue—a fortissimo harmony of color no painter could possibly have gotten away with.

Twenty miles from Igloo Creek we pulled up at the glacier-draining Toklat and I found out what happens when there is much instead of little river in the river bed.

The river bottom was a gravel bar two miles across, and the many interlacing streams that made up the Toklat were running through and over it, swift and deep. They would sweep a man off his feet unless he held on to his horse's tail and allowed himself to be dragged through the water like a drowned rat.

I was grateful to Harry Karstens for establishing a trail tent on the far side of that chilly river, and equipping it with a good stove. You could live all winter in a tent like that; and some of my neighbors-to-be, whom I was to meet next day, did just that.

These were the miners on their above-timberline claims at Copper Mountain, a half day's hike from the Toklat. There had been a stampede to Copper Mountain in 1921; but now only half a dozen prospectors were left at the diggings, still doing assessment work and still hoping to find the hidden vein that the first rich find of float ore had come from. Fritz and I gave out a few pieces of mail to some of them, and passed along the news; in the absence of radios, each traveller who had seen a newspaper recently was his own broadcasting station.

They were typical outdoor men, these miners—the kind you can spot anywhere, hard-working, conscientious, asking only to keep on with their digging in the hope of striking it rich. I was glad I was going to have them as neighbors within a day's walk.

To a city dweller, I suppose, these fellows would look seedy, unkempt, down-at-the-heels. They had neither the time nor the inclination to dress up in the glamorous regalia of a prospector. They were the peculiarly persistent type who will hang on after all the first stampeders have pulled out. Their claims, and their tents, were spotted all over the alpine-moss hillside. Some had walled up rocks and dirt around the canvas for greater warmth; one man had gone to the enormous trouble of freighting up logs for a cabin, a feat his fellow prospectors undoubtedly thought was time unnecessarily taken from mining.

From those hillside claims I could see my final destination fifteen

miles away—the dark stretch of spruce forest alongside the McKinley River, known as the Big Timber. It was the largest acreage of spruce in that part of the country. I was glad I was going to be in trees again.

The Big Timber is on the north bank of the McKinley, a stream that keeps you too busy to look around. It is swifter, deeper, and I'm sure colder than the Toklat. We almost lost a horse going through it next day before we finally wound up at a level spot on the edge of a dense spruce grove, on a point that let you see for miles up and down the river's wide gravel bars.

"Well," Fritz remarked, "here we are. Like it?"

I hardly heard him. Directly across the river rose the highest mountain, from its base to its summit, in the whole world. You can't imagine the impact of that sheer rock-and-ice upthrust. No foothills. Of McKinley's 20,320 feet of height, almost 18,000 feet rises right up from the riverbank and at such an angle that the summit was only 28 air-line miles from where I stood gazing, bug-eyed. Why, if that mountain had been any steeper I felt it would be leaning over dripping glacier water onto my hat.

"Hey, Grant. You still here?"

"Don't rightly know. Does the view from here always hit people this way?"

"Guess so. Harry always stops here, and just looks. I reckon he's retracing his steps up the mountain."

I hated to turn away even long enough to unpack the horses—a silly piece of business for a grown man who was going to spend four months right in this spot. Nevertheless, there's something about really high mountains that gives some people, me among them, a deep sense of pride in being on earth and part of all that majesty. It's as if your spirits are lifted up as the mountain goes up. When a man has that feeling, he'd better hit for the high places because, let's face it, he's a sucker for perpendicular real estate.

Next day we started in on the cabin. "Pick your trees the way you did for the cabins at headquarters," Fritz said. "We'll let the horses haul them in." Accordingly I selected a tree here and another a distance away, so their cutting would not leave a raw gash in the wilderness. We had brought along a horse collar, and in the two days before Fritz went back with the animals, we used a make-shift harness to haul our logs out of the forest by horse power. After

Fritz had headed back along the trail, riding one of his horses bare-back, I set to work to put up my 10 by 12 foot residence. I had mail five months overdue to deliver, but I knew it was important to get the roof on while the good weather held and the ground that would be under the cabin was still dry.

If you've never built a log cabin, here's the way it is done:

First you clear away the moss down to firm dirt, and level it off. The actual start of your cabin resembles a pen: Two logs are placed on the ground at the width you want (ten feet for me), exactly parallel to each other and notched at each end on the upper side. Two more logs are placed crossways in the notches, and they too get a notch on the end of the upper side. You just keep on doing this until your walls are high enough so you won't bump your head on the roof. Pack moss firmly into the chinks between the logs to make your home air-tight.

If you want a door, or windows, you do not, as in ordinary house construction, cut your timbers first to allow for the openings. When your log cabin walls are lintel height (about two logs below the eaves) you put wedges between the logs along the lines where the jambs will come, then simply saw out the holes.

The best Alaska cabins have a double roof, and that was the kind I was going to have. I piled moss on split spruce poles slanting down from the ridge pole, then put on four inches of topsoil. After that I whipsawed logs into boards and gave the entire top an overlapping board cover that would shed a cloudburst. Once warmed up, this kind of roof is not only watertight, it retains the cabin's warmth for many hours after the stove has gone out.

All this took me a total of sixteen days. I planned to finish off the cabin by whipsawing more lumber for a floor, bunks, shelves and furniture but in the meantime I had that business for Uncle Sam I wanted to get on with. There were some sizeable bundles of mail stored in the shelter tent.

The Big Timber was part of the Kantishna mining district, where there had been a gold rush twenty years before. The park boundary touched the edge of the mining area, and there were still a few prospectors and trappers scattered in the sheltering ravines, panning out a little gold, raising vegetables, taking pelts, drying, canning or freezing caribou meat—making a pioneer living one way and another.

The evening before I began my get-acquainted mail deliveries I sat in the doorway of my cabin—now officially the Kantishna Ranger Station—watching the 12,000-foot peaks of the Alaska Range turn gold, then pink, while Denali looked down benevolently in his higher amber glow. I knew now, from talks with Harry Karstens, that climbing this mountain was not just a matter of walking up to the top. It took months of preparation, he said; it also took a considerable amount of financing, to get the right equipment and supplies for high-altitude conditions, and then pack them in to the base of the mountain. There would be no climbing of McKinley as part of my four months' tour of duty at its foot.

My first mail destination was a homestead ten miles away, at the far end of Wonder Lake. After hiking two miles along the Kantishna Trail next day, I topped a knoll and got my first look at the lake that has since been the subject of hundreds of photographs and paintings. It was smooth as glass that morning; it not only reflected the graceful spruces that fringed its banks, but also the entire upper half of McKinley was mirrored white in its blue waters. It was almost too spectacular to be true. (By the way, Wonder Lake did not get its name as a kind of travel-folder puffery. The way I heard the story, a party of miners were systematically prospecting the country during the Kantishna stampede, when a couple of them suddenly came on the four-mile stretch of water from the west. One miner said, "I wonder how we missed this before!" With frontier humor, the lake came to be called "I Wonder Lake" by prospectors. When maps of the region were drawn up, the name apparently looked like a typographical error to the cartographer, who cut out the "I".)

The homestead at the far end of Wonder Lake belonged to John and Paula Anderson. When plump, brown-haired Mrs. Anderson came to the door of the cabin, I found out the real importance of being a mailman. With four to five months between mails, it is not just the letters and packages—what I had for the Andersons made it look like Christmas—it is the word-of-mouth news you bring. Paul Anderson popped questions at me so fast about happenings in Fairbanks, at headquarters and "Outside" (anywhere outside Alaska) that I was kept too busy answering even to tell her that I had built a cabin and was going to be a ten-miles-away neighbor.

When I finally did get out this piece of local Kantishna gossip, she said:

"How perfectly delightful! It makes a home ever so much nicer when there are people around. You must come over for dinner often!"

I did, too. This visit was the beginning of many years of friendship with Paula and John. I found out they had come to this country eight years before, travelling by dog team in the middle of winter, going over a 6000 foot pass in the Alaska Range. They had tried gold mining and trapping, and were now running a roadhouse for miners and tourists, and raising foxes on the side. They also raised sled dogs to sell to trappers and prospectors. John continued trapping, and while he was out tending his winter trap lines Paula was often alone in the cabin for weeks at a time.

Their cabin had remarkable handmade furniture: chairs, table legs, lamps and chandeliers were all made of clear-varnished, fitted caribou antlers. Even the shelving was embellished with them. Since caribou raise a new crop of antlers every year, there was no danger of a shortage in furniture material.

"The Kantishna Ranger Station," I remarked, "could stand some decoration. A pair of antlers would look fine over the door."

"Easy," said John. "About twenty thousand head of caribou go traipsing through this country every fall. Some of those old bulls will certainly drop their antlers where you can pick them up."

The trail past the Andersons' roadhouse led to the ghost mining town of Eureka. Superintendent Karstens had said, "When you get there, be sure to look up Little Johnnie."

"Little Johnnie who?"

"Darned if I know his last name. I've known him since 1918, and that's all I've ever heard him called. He even gets mail addressed to Little Johnnie. When you meet someone who talks so fast you can hardly understand him, that's Little Johnnie."

Four miles below Wonder Lake I saw a man fishing along Moose Creek. He saw me and came over, holding up a string of grayling.

"Hello, I'm Little Johnnie, I just catch my supper, come—we go to my cabin and eat them."

His home was a log cabin on the bank of Moose Creek at Eureka. Only a few cabins were left of the town, occupied at times by hope-

ful prospectors, miners still working on old claims, and trappers. During the gold stampede more than two thousand people had wintered at Eureka.

"They comes and they goes," Johnnie said, "but Little Johnnie likes it here and he stays. If I want to work, I work. If not, I stay in cabin. My grubstake is in the gravel bank 'long the creek, and I don't need to worry about someone stealing it."

Little Johnnie was small but compactly put together—about five feet four inches tall, weighing around 120 pounds. He had built his cabin of large spruce logs. It was one big room which held two board bunks, a cooking stove in one corner, cupboard, table and numerous shelves stacked high with magazines and odds and ends. "Anything you want I can find on those shelves," he told me. "I can find an outfit to repair clothes or watches, mend pots and pans, or anything I need to keep my house going."

Seventy-five feet from his cabin was his cache, built like all such structures on tin-wrapped posts about ten feet above ground out of reach of animals. Food supplies, dog feed and other necessities that might tempt four-footed neighbors are stored in such buildings.

It was five years later, through the accident of a letter addressed to "John Busia," that I discovered Little Johnnie's last name, and found out he had come to Alaska from Croatia in 1918.

Johnnie trapped at times, took out some placer gold, raised a good garden and got all the wild meat he needed. When I became better acquainted with him I figured out that he lived ninety per cent off the country. He knew the little tricks so necessary to frontier living, of how to get, prepare and keep foods the country provided—and in so doing he was as modern as he could manage. He had a pressure cooker and a home-canning outfit; he canned blueberries and cranberries, and made currant jelly. When the weather turned warm, he canned his meat. He also put up grayling for the winter. He was a good cook and enjoyed company. The bread he baked would make most women envious.

To get to Johnnie's cabin you had to cross Moose Creek. The water was too deep to ford on foot, so he had invented a frontier cable car—a cable from which was suspended a board seat on a carriage that ran on pulleys, and took you from one bank to the other. His dogs acted as tramway announcers, barking to tell Little

Johnnie when visitors were coming. He would be there to meet you if he were anywhere around.

When you got into his cabin he would disappear down a trap door in the floor and return with several bottles of his own special beverage. This concoction was made of molasses, rice, hops and sugar. After one drink you started talking to yourself. After two drinks you answered yourself. I gave this drink the name of Kantishna Champagne, and it stuck.

After you had told him all the local news, Johnnie would say, "Shut up, and let me talk awhile." And talk he would, about anything and everything in the Kantishna.

"Last winter Joe Dalton die, I bury him. This winter Pete Nelson die, I bury Pete. I like a man and he dies, I build a box to put him in. Old Pete was a good neighbor and he got a box. Joe didn't get a box. Mr. Jim was lead dog for my team. When Mr. Jim died I made a good box for him. He's buried on the knoll back of the cabin." (Joe Dalton, it might be stated, was one of the men credited with discovering gold in the Kantishna; he was considered by many to be—to put it mildly—a fairly selfish fellow.

Little Johnnie, despite the above speech, was exceptionally even tempered and friendly. But one time, he told me, he almost came to blows with no less a person than the Alaska Road Commission foreman, Walter Brown.

"Brownie came to my cabin," Johnnie said. "We get ready to hunt caribou. We just finish breakfast when the dogs bark. I look out window and there is nice fat bull caribou not over a hundred yards from cabin. Brownie and I grab our guns, rush out. I shoot. I hear Brownie shoot almost same time.

"Caribou fall down. I think damn fool, what for he shoot. Now meat all shot to pieces. I don't look at him, I so mad, but start for caribou. Brownie yells, 'Where you going? The caribou isn't over there.' I tell him it is. We argue like the dickens. I get mad, Brownie get mad. I go over and clean out inside of caribou. When I come back I see Brownie bent over doing something. I go see what he's doing, and damn if he didn't get a big bull caribou. I tell him we both get one. We have good laugh, shake hands and go to cabin and have drink on it."

Johnnie told me one time, "I have a pay streak along Moose Creek but there is too much gravel on top to make any money. I

think maybe high water come this spring and wash off top. Then Little Johnnie shovel the bottom in my sluice box and made good pay." He called the turn, too. When I came along after the spring ice break-up he had his sluice boxes set up and was shoveling like mad. Three weeks later, after the flood waters subsided, he had a sizeable grubstake.

Johnnie was a self-trained naturalist. He could tell you when the cranes, ducks and geese would be starting south for the winter. If they dallied around he'd say, "Late fall this year You don't fool those birds." Johnnie could tell you the habits of almost all the wild things, although most of them he didn't know by name.

In the fall he always got his wild meat before mating time. "Too poor after running time; no good when running time on," he said. The black bears were numerous in the fall, feeding on the blueberries that grew in thick, foot-high bushes on the Kantishna tundra. Johnnie would kill just one, for lard and meat. "I could kill many of them," he said, "but they don't harm me."

Johnnie had trapped over the same country ever since he came to the Kantishna. He had three line cabins besides his home cabin, and looked after his trap line as a farmer looks after his crops. If the weather turned warm and the foxes started to rub against trees to scratch themselves—which usually ruins the fur—he quit trapping. Later, Johnnie carried a battery operated radio, and got the latest fur prices while he was out on his trap lines. If fur wasn't bringing much, he would take up his traps.

Johnnie could tell by the signs about how many fur-bearing animals were left, and at times he quit at Christmas when he could still trap for two months more. "I leave plenty, and there's always plenty for stock." If all the trappers in Alaska were like Johnnie, there would be no need for closed seasons because of overtrapping. The job of wildlife agent would be easy.

Johnnie used three dogs to haul his traps and other equipment around his trap lines. These dogs were his pride and joy. Some trappers sent theirs to fish camps during the summer—boarded them out, that is—but not Johnnie. He kept his with him all the time, and they got the best of care.

Once I made a patrol trip through the lower McKinley River canyon, which is included in the Kantishna mining district. At that time this area was outside the park boundaries, and Little Johnnie

included it on his trap line. The canyon had steep, rocky sides, and during the summer and early fall the volume of water made it impossible to cross the stream on foot. Near the middle of the canyon I came upon a cable stretched from bank to bank, at least fifty feet above the water. I recognized that this was Johnnie's way of crossing before the river froze. It was necessary for him to make trips over his line to prepare for the trapping season.

He used a pulley that opened on a hinge, so he could put it on the cable, tie a rope to the pulley with a loop for him to sit in, and pull himself across with his hands on the cable. This is a common way to cross streams in the wilds where there are no bridges. What puzzled me was a big shackle in the middle of the cable. Surely no one could run a pulley over that! Next time I saw Little Johnnie, I asked him about it.

"Oh, that!" He looked pleased with himself. "Little Johnnie has no store to go and buy a cable; he does the best he can with what he has. I only have two short pieces of cable, so I shackle them together. When I cross on the cable I have a light pack, maybe forty pounds, and my rifle. When my pulley gets to the shackle I take hold of the shackle with one hand, lift my weight out of rope. Then with other hand I unhook pulley, move it past shackle, hook it on again. Then I go on across."

I smiled to myself. What a sight that would be, to see the little man going about his regular duties with not a thought of danger, while hanging by one hand fifty feet above a raging torrent!

From Little Johnnie's cabin, it was a mile to Joe and Fannie Quigley's place. After I took my leave of Johnnie on that first trip, I headed up the canyon to give them their letters. I was scarcely prepared for the slight, almost frail little woman who greeted me at her cabin door with a brisk smile and a flood of conversation.

"Hello. You're new here. How long can you stay? Joe's over at the mine, but he'll be back tonight. Come in—want a piece of my blueberry pie?"

I said I surely did, and as she got out the pie and cut a wedge with quick, capable hands I told her who I was. "And here's your bundle of letters, Mrs. Quigley."

"Thanks. Everybody 'round here calls me Fannie, so Grant, you call me Fannie too. Here's your pie."

That pie had one of the most delicious crusts I've ever tasted, and I said so.

"It's the bear lard does it," Fannie said. "I shoot black bears in the fall and render out the lard. Makes a nice flaky crust."

That was the first of many astonishing things I learned about this small up-and-at-'em frontierswoman. That evening, after her husband came in, she served us a dinner of caribou steak, potatoes, beets, carrots and rhubarb from her own garden, and of course, more blueberry pie. All this was followed by hours of story-telling. It seems that Joe had come north by way of the Chilkoot Pass in 1893, had prospected at Forty Mile and Circle down the Yukon, had gone to the Klondike in '97, left it and joined the rush to Fairbanks; in 1905 he was one of the first to discover gold in the Kantishna, and actually started the stampede by unconcernedly showing a two-ounce nugget of raw gold in Fairbanks.

Joe was tall, lean and long-legged, sharp-featured and keen eyed, a pipe smoker rather than a talker—in many ways the exact opposite of Fannie. He also had a much more casual attitude toward life.

Fannie was twenty-seven when she determined to follow the stampede up from the States to the Klondike in 1898. For some reason she and Joe never ran across each other there. Fannie earned her living first as a dance hall girl, later by operating eating places.

"You couldn't call 'em boarding houses," she said, "because they were always in a tent. I planned it to be the first on the scene at a new strike, because that's the way you made the big money selling meals. In winter I went by dog team, in summer by boat or any other way that would get me there with my tent, Yukon stove, bacon, beans, flour and other stuff. I reckon I've hung out my 'Meals For Sale' sign at most every strike in the north."

In 1906 Fannie joined the Kantishna stampede. It was there she met Joe Quigley and married him, even though his claim never proved to be rich. "Those two-ounce nuggets were too far apart," Joe said. Then this little 100-pound bundle of energy that was Fannie Quigley settled down to a quiet life as a big-game hunter, trapper, dog musher, prospector, wood cutter and gardener.

Her garden was one of her pet projects. As the soil near their cabin was not fit for gardening, she gathered soil from the flats near Moose Creek and hauled it home by dog team. If she needed

more during the summer she packed it on her back. She terraced her garden with rocks into a series of beds; the spring sun warmed the rocks and during the night they kept the soil warm. She had only ten weeks of growing weather in the Kantishna, but by her methods she was successful in raising rhubarb, potatoes, celery, carrots, beets, turnips, onions, lettuce and radishes farther north than most people thought these things could be grown. Her garden was so productive it supplied all their needs.

She picked gallons of wild blueberries and cranberries, prepared them in jellies and jams, and preserved them raw. She killed almost all the wild game they needed for meat, and when the graylings were leaving the small streams in the fall she would catch enough for their use during the winter.

"Believe me," she said, "everything you gather for food helps lighten the freight."

The Quigleys had to freight their supplies by dog team from Nenana, a hundred miles away, and a year's outfit was brought in during March. This was a job Joe usually handled. Fannie was liberal with her food, but she would not allow anyone to waste a morsel. Tom Marquam, a well-known Alaska attorney, once made a trip into the Kantishna and spent the night with Fannie and Joe. That evening at dinner when Fannie brought in dessert she noticed a piece of butter left on Marquam's plate.

"What are you going to do with that butter?" she asked.

"I took more than I could eat," Marquam confessed.

"Don't you know we have to haul our supplies a hundred miles by dog team? You eat that butter, or you'll get the same plate with the butter still on it for breakfast!"

"All right," said Marquam, "I'll eat it with my pie." And he did.

I once had a Christmas dinner with Fannie and Joe that consisted of black bear roast, gravy, mashed potatoes, fresh cabbage, hot rolls, currant jelly, cranberry sauce, and blueberry shortcake. Only the flour and sugar had been freighted in. The rest was off the country.

In 1926, when airplanes were far from common in the McKinley country, I thought I heard a plane one time at Big Timber, the sound apparently coming from farther north over the Kantishna. On my next trip I asked Fannie if she had heard a plane engine.

"Heard it! Huh, listen to this! You know Joe walked out to the railroad on business, and he decided to come back by airplane. One morning I wake up to a loud roaring noise and jump out of bed. There is an airplane landing on the gravel bar along Moose Creek. All of a sudden it makes a loud roar and leaves the ground, then lands in the middle of Moose Creek on its nose.

"I run down and see three men. One of them is Joe and his face is covered with blood. He is the only one hurt and his nose is split clean through lengthwise and is hanging in two pieces. I help him to the cabin. Then I get out my needle and catgut, wash it and sew up his nose. That was the first time I ever sewed up anyone, and I sewed it the same as I do my moccasins, which is by what I call the baseball stitch. Later I tell the doctor in Fairbanks how I sewed it and he says it shouldn't have been sewed that way.

"But," and there was a satisfied twinkle in her eye, "it hasn't given Joe any trouble, so I guess the baseball stitch is as good as their fandangled sewing."

After seeing Fannie's exquisite embroidery, you could expect her adept fingers to manage anything. For instance, she grew many varieties of flowers, dried them, and reproduced them in needlework in the exact colors nature had chosen. This remarkable woman was an artist with a needle.

Joe was by way of being a self-made scientist. He had quit placering after he found his claim was paying no more than grubstake money; he got hold of books on geology, mineralogy and mining, and took to lode prospecting—that is, running shafts into hillsides to discover veins of ore, instead of sluicing "float" ore from creek beds. Joe also learned to operate his own assaying outfit, and it seemed to me he was never happier than when he had a number of ore samples to work on of an evening.

A man named Grubstake Bill once brought Joe a nugget he said was pure gold, and wanted Joe to finance his mine on the strength of it. (Bill had previously tried the proposition on me, with no success.) Joe asked if he could test the nugget, and Bill made the mistake of agreeing. Joe dropped it into a bottle of acid and the nugget disappeared, leaving a green streak. That was the last of Grubstake Bill's copper nugget.

After some false starts Joe finally struck it . . . well, medium rich, with the Red Top mine, up the hill from Eureka. He'd have

made more money if there had been a smelter closer than 1,900 miles away. Joe had to figure ways and means to send his ore on a journey that would have made Jason's trip for the golden fleece look like a stroll down to the corner Greek restaurant. The Red Top yielded base ore containing gold and silver, and Joe had it hauled by dog team 28 miles to the head of navigation on the Kan-tishna River, loaded on a boat and carried sixty miles to Nenana, transferred to the railroad and carried 400 miles to Seward, there to be loaded on a boat that would steam 1,400 miles to the smelter dock in Tacoma, Washington. Joe had to clear \$150 a ton just to break even, yet for years he made money on the Red Top.

This tall, gentle, hawk-nosed man was handy with everything, and taught me a lot about frontier carpentry and blacksmithing. Although Fannie got most of the Quigley's meat supply, Joe was one of the best rifle shots in the country, and hunted with deadly efficiency. He used field glasses, spotted his game and where it was going, then figured a way to get there first. Once I saw him shoot a caribou through the backbone at 400 yards—exactly where he wanted to hit, to paralyze the animal so it couldn't run and stumble over a nearby cliff.

As far as I was concerned, my strongest feeling about Joe Quigley was the same as for his wife Fannie—he was a darn good neighbor. One time Joe showed up at my Big Timber cabin, coming in on his long legs from the railroad, while I was away on a patrol. Joe was in a big hurry to get home, because some mining engineers had gone in ahead of him to look at the Red Top mine with the idea of buying it. But Joe noticed that my cache, with my winter's supply of food in it, had fallen down. The grub was scattered all over the ground, but it was still dry, as it had only been exposed a day or two. Joe promptly started the big job of carrying all that food into the cabin, although it meant he'd probably miss his customers for the mine. Fortunately, Ranger Lee Swisher showed up an hour later, so Joe was able to take off again.

On one of my visits to the Quigleys I found Fannie absent.

"She's been gone for five days, over to Bear Creek," Joe said. "She took the dog team and will bring back a load of moose meat we cached there. She also put out some trap lines on her last trip and is doing some trapping."

It was getting dark when the yelping of my dogs told us Fannie

was coming. Joe and I helped her unhitch her dogs and unload the meat. Before we went into the house she gave me hay for a bed for each of my dogs. She always had a bed of grass for a visitor's dogs, and sometimes there were as many as twenty dogs. She gathered the grass in summer, dried it, and kept it handy.

"By God," she told me, "it is for the dogs I do this, not for you bums of rangers!" By this time I was onto her gruff speech.

After supper and a little encouragement from me, Fannie told us about her trip. "Going over, about ten miles, one of my fox traps had been robbed by a wolverine. All that he left me was one of the legs. That got me riled, and I knew if I didn't get rid of that devil I couldn't hope to get any fur."

"What did you do about it?" Joe asked.

"I put out some traps for that so-and-so," whereupon Fannie hauled a wolverine skin from her war bag, "and here he is."

Only once did Fannie ever admit to having a really trying experience. Joe had driven a mine tunnel on the other side of the hill behind the cabin, and rather than walk eight miles to come home each day he was living in a tent.

"I go over once a week with my dogs, packing food for him. He usually has a fire going the day he is expecting me, and we have dinner together.

"This trip there is no smoke coming out of the stovepipe. I start to unpack, then I hear a groan from the tent. I push back the tent flaps and there I see Joe lying on the ground. One of his legs is stretched out in a funny way, and he is unconscious. I straighten him a bit and then manage to get him on the cot. His hip is broken and I splint it up the best I know how. Also, one of his shoulders is broken.

"When Joe comes to, he tells me he'd had a cave-in in his prospect tunnel, and a big boulder had got him in the shoulder and leg. He'd managed to get out before more cave-ins happened, and crawled to the tent where he knew I'd find him.

"I make Joe comfortable, then hike for the nearest help, which is six miles away, where some miners were working on one of the creeks. One man goes on foot ninety miles to the railroad to get word to have a doctor and a plane come in and take Joe to the hospital. We pack him to the gravel bar on Moose Creek. When the airplane lands a week later, Joe's leg is accidentally re-broken while

he's being loaded into the plane. Oh, I'd rather they'd have busted mine!"

While Joe was still in the hospital in Fairbanks, I visited Fannie again to see what I could do for her. I found her drying wet clothes.

"My gosh, Fannie! How did you get your clothes wet?"

"Well," Fannie said, "you know Joe won't be home for some time, and I was out getting our winter meat. I shot at a bull caribou and he moved behind a clump of willows. I thought I had missed him. Just then another big bull came in sight, and I took a shot at him. After I shot he jumped toward the first one, and they both started across Moose Creek.

"The water was about four feet deep, and full of slush ice. When they got in the middle the darned fools fell dead. A nice fix to be in! Two caribou in the middle of a stream running slush ice!"

"I came back and got some light rope, waded out and tied the rope to those two caribou. Then I tied the other end to a willow clump so when I got those critters free they wouldn't float downstream away from me. It took me at least an hour of tuggin' and luggin' to get 'em out, but I have all the caribou I'll need this winter."

I offered to butcher and cache them for her.

"Oh, that's all done. You take it easy. Dinner'll be ready soon."

Fannie never had any formal education. She was born in a Bohemian settlement in Nebraska and didn't even learn to speak English properly until she was grown up. But she was alert and widely read, and could hold her own with anyone who came along.

One evening an airplane landed in a gathering storm on her gravel bar airstrip while Joe was away, and two men came up to her door. One was Father Fitzgerald, a Catholic missionary, the other was his pilot. They explained that the storm had prevented their going on to Fairbanks. Of course Fannie invited them to stay at her cabin.

That evening she served them her famous caribou stew. The pilot loaded his plate, but Father Fitzgerald carefully picked out the vegetables and avoided the caribou. Fannie eyed this proceeding. "What in hell's the matter?" she exploded. "Don't you like what I do to caribou?"

"You know, today is Friday, Mrs. Quigley. I don't eat meat."

"I see," said Fannie, and disappeared into the kitchen. She re-

turned with a bowl of lettuce. "Here, eat rabbit food. Rabbits are religious every day of the week." Fortunately Father Fitzgerald, like most frontier people, had a good sense of humor.

Two days later, when the weather had cleared, he said to Fannie, "How much do we owe you?"

"You don't owe me anything. We're glad to have you any time."

"Well, look here, then . . . after my pilot gets me to Fairbanks, he'll be flying back past here. What kind of chocolates do you like?"

"Schlitz," Fannie replied instantly.

Next day the pilot came back with two cases of beer and a quart of whiskey.

Fannie provided her guests with deep, duck-feather mattresses. When I sank into mine, that first evening at Fannie and Joe's cabin, it felt so wonderfully soft I almost hated to go to sleep. When I woke up next morning Joe had gone back to the mine.

"What'll you have for breakfast, Grant?"

I knew what I wanted and said so without hesitation.

"Pie."

Fannie's eyes twinkled. "Glad you like it. I baked it last March."

"What?"

"Come out here and I'll show you." She led the way to two tunnels in the side of the hill and right there I got an insight into the remarkable scope of frontier inventiveness as practiced by those shrewd human beings called sourdoughs.

8



Tricks of the Trade

FANNIE PULLED OPEN THE PLANK DOOR of one of the tunnels and lit a candle lying on a ledge. A few feet inside I saw another door. She opened that and there was a third door. We went through that and saw another.

"Joe drove this tunnel into permanent-frozen ground," she said. "It never panned out as a mine, but we got something better out of it. Kind of cold in here, isn't it? Come on."

It certainly was cold. About ten above, I'd judge. Beyond that fourth door I saw stacked up sides of caribou, moose, bear, skinned and cleaned rabbits, porcupines, ptarmigan—a whole year's supply of meat. All along one wall were shelves full of dozens of mouth-watering pies, cakes, bread, rolls, doughnuts—all frozen hard as rocks.

"With this layout," Fannie remarked, gesturing casually around, "I can get all my game in the early fall, when it's at its best. And I can bake up pies and cakes and stuff whenever I have time on my hands. They freeze fast and taste just like fresh when you thaw 'em out."

I was astonished. I still am. I estimate that Fannie and Joe had the jump on old Clarence Birdseye, who was supposed to have discovered quick-freezing, by at least five years.

Fannie had another trick up her sleeve. About seventy-five feet from her deep-freeze tunnel there was another shaft, also with a series of doors.

"This one goes into gravel and thawed ground," Fannie said. "See, we have to timber it up strong. Those doors keep the cold out, so it never freezes inside. Even when the thermometer slides down

past zero outside, it's still around forty in here, and my garden truck keeps nice and fresh all winter long."

By Fannie's candlelight I saw neat mounds of head lettuce, piles of carrots, turnips, beets, cabbage, onions—the entire harvest of her intensely cultivated garden, kept as crisp in her tunnel as if it were in the Crisper Tray of the finest, shiniest, self-defrosting automatic refrigerator.

That winter I imitated Fannie's methods as nearly as I could, and added some touches of my own. I baked up loaves of bread, whisked them from the oven outdoors into below zero weather, where they froze quickly with the moisture still inside. I then put them into an empty five-gallon tallow can—five loaves to a can—and stored them up in my cache, along with my frozen meat and dog feed. I also figured out a way to have beans when I wanted them, without having to cook them three hours; first, though, I found to my disgust that it takes almost as long to thaw out a frozen pre-cooked pot of beans as to cook them. Moreover, the outside beans will burn on the stove while the inside is still a lump of ice. Next time, I cooked my beans until they were almost dry, then flung them out onto a canvas spread outdoors, standing by while they froze to discourage birds that might poach on them. I soon had a bunch of individual hard-frozen beans, which I scraped off the canvas into a flour sack. After that, when I got a hunger for beans I just rattled some out of that sack into a pan with a little water, and in ten minutes—steaming hot beans. I was fairly proud of myself to have figured that one out; it was particularly handy on winter patrol trips.

Little tricks like this are a few of the ways people in the north get along with a minimum of drudgery. Here's a stunt Harry Karstens put me onto: there are lots of "spring creeks" in the park, creeks that flow all winter, never freezing. When I was going to be gone from my cabin for some time, I would lower all my canned milk into one of those creeks. The water kept it from freezing and curdling.

In spite of such occasional creeks, water is usually a problem in winter, particularly at the tail end when the snow is dirty. That goes also for the ice on top of a lake, which is full of scum, twigs, seeds and animal droppings. One time I was with a U.S. Land Office party surveying park boundary lines; we decided to camp be-

side a lake, but there was over four feet of ice on it. It would be tough work chopping through to water. I thought to myself, How can I get a hole down there, even a small hole? I had along my 30.06 rifle. I aimed it straight down, and let go. The ice cracked, and water boiled up like a gusher. (Water under ice on a lake is always under pressure, and will spurt through a crack.) I guess those Land Office fellows are still talking about that ranger up at McKinley who dug a well with a rifle.

My second winter at the Kantishna cabin I invented another water supply system. It wasn't as successful, at least not at first. The McKinley River was frozen solid. No use trying to shoot a hole in it. So I chopped out ice as I needed it, and hauled it by dog team for drinking water, using snow water for dishes. Finally, I decided to have a supply of drinking water on hand, and spent an hour hauling dozens of blocks of ice, which I placed in a neat pile near the cabin door.

That night my dogs' barking woke me up. I looked out and saw my wheel dog, Jake, scampering loose in the moonlight. It took only a few chilly minutes to catch him, repair the loose snap in his chain, and hitch him up again. But next morning when I went out to get ice I found my water supply completely ruined. That rascal Jake had sprinkled it thoroughly. He could just as well have used the nearby trees that nature provided. I had to build a small platform out of poles, five feet off the ground, and thereafter stored my water supply on that.

The McKinley River was always throwing tough problems at me. In solving one I devised a rough-and-ready way to cross swift-moving glacial streams, which I will gladly pass on to anyone wanting this frigid experience. My first autumn at Big Timber I was making a patrol to the west boundary, which meant I had to get across the McKinley. I figured the best crossing was at a place where the river was split up into six or seven small streams, loosely braided together. All these were easy to cross but one. It was running swift and deep due to the fall rains, and every place I tried to ford it I had to scramble back before the current swept me and my forty-pound pack off my feet. This was exhausting work, as well as futile. I was sitting on the gravel bank trying to regain my breath, when the thought hit me that if I were only fifty pounds heavier I'd be able to hold my footing. There were plenty of boulders strewn

along the river bed. I picked up one weighing about sixty pounds, and started across. With that extra weight I bucked Mr. River's swift current without any trouble. Anyone wanting to go back the way I came can still pick up that boulder and carry it across.

Harry Karstens had a few tricks of his own . . . but his were mostly a complete and flowing efficiency in the routine of outdoor living. One time Harry, Fritz Nyberg and I were on a photographing-exploring expedition high into an unmapped area in the Alaska Range. We made our camp near timberline, but all we could scratch up for fuel was a kind of high-altitude heather called cascade. We built a rock fireplace; then, under Harry's direction, organized this relay-team operation to get our grub cooked. I scurried around gathering heather and passing it on to Fritz; he wadded it into tight balls and kept feeding the fire; Harry did the cooking, moving his pots about with quick dexterity to take advantage of the hottest parts of the little blaze. Maybe one man could accomplish what it took three of us to do, but he wouldn't eat for quite a while.

An Alaska trail trick that would never have occurred to me I learned from Fritz Nyberg. We were about to start back to headquarters from Big Timber to bring out summer supplies. It was the first of April and the snow was getting soft and wet.

"This," I said, "is going to be a soggy three days' hike."

"Don't worry. It won't be three days. It'll be nights."

"Nights?"

"Yes. We'll travel at night when the cold crusts over the snow and gives us footing." We did, and arrived in 2½ days—nights, rather—not even breathing hard.

In building the Big Timber cabin we had used horses to haul in the logs. But when I set about building my cache it was winter and I had dogs instead of horses. I decided to try snaking logs with a dog team. I chopped a slanting wedge on one end of each log, so it wouldn't dig into the snow; then I had my dogs pack down a trail by hauling in the small roof poles first. Even then I wasn't so sure that five dogs would be able to budge those heavy timbers.

Well, I learned one thing Alaska mushers have known for years: never underestimate the power of a dog. Those bushy-tailed fellows whisked my logs up to the building site as if they were towing a half-loaded sled.

My cache was to be on poles ten feet high, and I tried out a stunt I'd heard about to make my post holes. I piled limbs and brush where the posts were to be and started brush fires to thaw out the ground. This trick worked, but I hadn't realized that it would take two days of fire-tending and a terrific amount of firewood to get my post holes a foot and a half down.

The country north of the Alaska Range is considerably rigorous, all right, but among the things you do not have to worry about are poisonous snakes, herbs, poison oak or poison ivy. Most of a man's worries, particularly if he's out alone, are about illness or accidents. In the Pioneers' Home at Sitka many of the old people are minus arms or legs, due to such things as a bad swing with an axe, or going through overflow ice and getting frozen legs. You have to keep a constant watch out for frostbite, and rub at the first sign of numbness. Rub with your hands, not with snow. (Darned if I know how the idea got started of rubbing a frostbitten place with snow; it may be that rubbing with *wet* snow, indoors, or with cold water, would thaw out your flesh more gradually and thus be less painful. But it's no help out in the open.)

Another thing you have to watch out for all winter long is snow blindness. Boric acid to soothe sore eyes is standard equipment in a winter pack. "Snow blindness" doesn't mean you go blind, except in the most extreme cases involving foolhardy cheechakos; but it does mean your eyes pain, you want to keep them closed, and you are completely miserable. I learned by unpleasant experience to watch out for one of those warm, dull days in spring when you are perspiring and take your dark glasses off. That, by the way, is the only time those Eskimo slit goggles are more efficient. They won't fog up.

Even a simple accident like spraining an ankle can add up to big trouble when you're out on your own. One brisk fall day I had just finished building a patrol cabin on McLeod Creek, fifteen miles west of Big Timber; I was hiking back and had just crossed a creek at the halfway mark when I slipped on a tundra hummock and felt the sudden twinge of an ankle going the wrong way. It was an angry red and beginning to swell by the time I got the shoe-pac off.

I ate a bannock-and-bacon sandwich while I considered my situation: I was seven and a half miles from home. It was ten-thirty in the morning. My ankle was swelling so much the leg of my shoe-

pac pinched the flesh. When I unlaced it, the pain was still sharp and throbbing—torn ligaments insisting on their misery. I had the feeling that if I stayed and made a cold camp there on the tundra that ankle would swell so much I couldn't walk on it for a week. So I cut myself a willow walking stick and started hobbling along, resting every quarter mile or so.

Just before dark, seven hours later, I was less than half a mile from the Big Timber cabin, but I had to cross the swollen McKinley River. With that ankle, there was no picking up a rock and carrying it across.

I hobbled around until I found a place where most of the small streams in the river bed merged into one stream, then parked my pack high on a gravel bank.

"Now, Ranger," I muttered, "let's see how it feels to be a fish."

That water was so cold I couldn't even yell. When the current took me off my feet I swam upstream at an angle and let the current carry me across. It was so swift that even in the shallows it rolled me over three times. I was almost numb when I came to a stop against the east bank. I grabbed a willow, clambered out and headed for the ranger cabin, not even stopping to wring out my clothes.

That swim in glacier water did one thing for me. It made my ankle too numb to ache, so that I made good time to my cabin door. Once inside, I came near burning down the place, stumbling around with a can of kerosene to get a roaring fire started in a hurry; after which I left my wet clothes in a heap and shivered under blankets for half an hour before I could feel my ankle beginning to ache again. The ankle then got the standard frontier treatment: boiling water with plenty of epsom salts, a soaking for a full hour.

They tell me that today it is common medical practice to make a patient keep walking on a sprain. I can testify that it works; three days after I got back I took a ten-mile stroll over to the Andersons on Wonder Lake, and those tendons gave off only the mildest complaints.

Another curse of frontier travelling is toothache. I was on a snowshoe patrol west of the Kantishna one March when a front molar started acting up. The oil of cloves I had in my first-aid kit did very little good at first, later did none. When I got back to the

Kantishna ranger station I could stand it no longer. I got out my pliers. After a few experiments I realized that if I used them I'd only snap off the top of that aching tooth. I put my snowshoes back on and headed for Paula and John Anderson's.

John had not yet returned from his trap line, but Paula quickly found me several pairs of pliers. One pair looked useable.

Paula said, "Grant, I can't bear to see anyone suffer," and went out the cabin door. I closed my eyes and waggled the tooth from side to side to loosen it. Then I gave a hard pull, and on the second try, out came the tooth. Sure, it hurt. I held up that tooth, and as many a man has done before, I said, "Now—go ahead and ache." Then I called Paula back in.

"Paula," I said, "with all these antlers around here, maybe you can use a different kind of bone" and dropped my ex-tooth into her hand. I don't think my humor sat very well with her. She put my tooth down in a hurry. But she and John took wonderful care of me when I stayed over for a day, feeding me soft foods and generally fussing over me until my sore jaw began to heal.

That's a thing you quickly learn about frontier people—they help each other as a matter of course. Pioneer America, I think, was a country born and based on cooperation. A large part of it has changed, now, to a country of competition, where everybody tries to get ahead of everybody else; but Alaska is still, largely, a country of cooperation and I'm glad of it.

One time when I was visiting New York, I overheard a conversation as I was standing on top of the RCA Building looking out over the city. A man and a girl came up to the parapet beside me. The man said, "All those buildings! All those huge hotels. All full of people!" The girl said, "And we don't have to know a one of them. Isn't it wonderful?"

Such an idea would just never occur to an Alaskan. Up north people are friendly as a matter of principle and of survival. They know that the kind of nature they're up against doesn't give second chances, so they make up for it by giving each other all the chance in the world.

They even help a fellow when he isn't anywhere around. For instance, if a man has a cabin a little way from a main trail, he'll put a line of blazes from that trail to his cabin door. Or if there isn't much timber, he'll put up poles or a flag on a tripod. In the wilder-

ness you don't try to hide from people. One time on my first trip along the north boundary I was getting ready to camp under a tree in below-zero weather. I happened to look up and saw a blaze on the tree. I sighted the line of blazes and followed them to a snug log cabin, with plenty of wood beside the stove.

When I was ready to leave I did what all uninvited north-country guests do: I left a note, saying, "I stayed in your cabin and was mighty grateful. Thanks a lot. Hope to see you some time." Often you don't even know the name of the owner. But you leave a note—and plenty of wood, at least as much as you have burned.

That's an inviolable piece of frontier etiquette—leave wood for a fire. Everyone not a cheechako does it, and everyone counts on its being done.

One time I hiked over to Windy Creek ranger cabin in late fall, walking through deep snow in Riley Creek Pass and hugging a slippery hillside alongside Windy Creek because the water had backed up. Opposite the cabin I found the creek filled with slush, ice and water—three to four feet deep. It was freeze-up time, the temperature was already ten below, but that creek wouldn't be frozen over for a week.

Here I was within a hundred yards of my destination, but I knew if I got wet to the waist and there wasn't wood in the cabin, my legs would be dangerously frozen before I could gather wood and get a fire started.

Of course I could follow the creek four miles down to the railroad bridge, cross over and hike four miles back. But I was tired of hiking, and hungry besides. I said "Let there be wood!" and waded into the slush-filled stream.

It probably didn't take more than two minutes, but before I got to the cabin my pants had begun to freeze. I pushed open the door. I don't know when I've seen a more beautiful sight than that lovely pile of dry wood alongside the tin stove.

Another unwritten law of the north is: never raid another man's cache. If hunger drives you to take some food, leave your name and address and a note saying you'll either replace the grub or pay for it, whichever the owner wants. *Never* take all the supply.

The food in a cache, of course, can be just as essential to life as wood beside the stove, and it is treated with corresponding deadly importance. Why, one time in Fairbanks two men were in danger

of lynching when it was learned that they had cleaned out another man's cache. The cache belonged to a German named Emil Maurer who was taking his wife and new-born baby back to civilization from their wilderness cabin. The two men, named Berry and Knight, had made off with a couple of hundred pounds of moose meat, leaving the couple and their child almost without food. The Maurers just barely made it to the cabin of a trapper forty miles away.

When this story got around Fairbanks, groups of sourdoughs gathered on street corners, and there was increasingly loud talk of rope justice. Berry and Knight slipped out of town in the middle of the night, and kept going for three hundred miles until they reached tidewater at Valdez and got a boat for the States.

In most other matters—particularly financial ones—Alaskans have the free and easy ways of all frontiers. A prize example of this was demonstrated by Maurice Marino, who operated a combination roadhouse, trading post and post office near park headquarters. Maurice had come to Alaska in 1898, and had no use for anything resembling red tape. One time when I went down to get my mail and supplies, Maurice was cooking as a stranger, who had just arrived on the weekly train, walked into the kitchen and announced he was a postal inspector. He showed Maurice his credentials and asked to inspect the post-office books.

Maurice gave him a key and pointed to a carpenter's tin chest with a lock, saying, "She's there," then went on tending his steaming pots.

Half an hour later the inspector handed back the key. Maurice asked, "Was she there?" The inspector shook his head. "No."

Maurice reached into his pocket and after much tugging and yanking brought out a roll of currency about four inches in diameter. He handed it to the inspector, remarking, "Maybe she's here."

The inspector counted off several bills, unlocked the carpenter's chest, put the money in it and returned the roll to Maurice. There must have been several thousand dollars in that roll; Maurice's attitude was, if the post office needs more money, let it help itself; it's an honest business, and won't take more than it deserves.

Alaskans have their own version of frontier humor. Most of it has to do with either cold weather or mosquitoes. You've heard of Sam McGee and his great love of central heating; then there is the

one about the placer miner who had just finished building a new sluice box when he was attacked by a swarm of the biggest mosquitoes he'd ever seen. They were about the size of crows, he said later, and not to be fooled with. So the resourceful miner turned his sluice box over and crawled under it. That didn't stop the mosquitoes—they rammed their stingers right through the inch-thick boards, probing for dinner. This naturally made the miner furious. The pesky insects were ruining a brand-new sluice box. So he picked up his hammer, and every time a stinger came through, he clinched it on the under side.

This turned out to be a mistake. After he had cinched twenty-five stingers, those mosquitoes revved up their wings and flew away with the box, leaving the poor man completely exposed. Lucky for him mosquitoes are essentially stupid; the rest of the swarm followed the twenty-five with the box, thinking their fellows insects had got hold of a good thing and didn't want to share it. Last the miner saw of his sluice box it was heading for tidewater at a 75-foot altitude.

My favorite is the story about the winter it got so cold all outside communication ceased. Your words froze as soon as they left your lips. Now, you would think that when the spring break-up came and people's conversation thawed out, you would hear the doggonedest clamor in the world. But that was not what happened because, of course, the cuss words thawed out first, so all you heard in the beginning was a lot of Damns and Hells and other remarks appropriate to the hard going of soggy, thawing weather; after which you heard some strangely polite language along these lines: "Listen, you (PAUSE), how about dealing me some of them (PAUSE) beans?" It was an example, I'm told, that served to make people kindlier to each other, at least for a week or two.

Most Alaskans have their own ideas on practical jokes. Such a one is Bobby Sheldon, who at one time ran the park's transportation concession, including the Savage River tourist camp. Bobby is a good camp cook, and in the fall when the camp was being closed down, he always did the cooking. One day in late September five Fairbanks business men arrived at the camp for a few days vacation. The first morning Bobby made hotcakes for them. One of the group decided to kid the cook by remarking that the cakes reminded him of the asbestos stove pads in his hardware store.

Now Bobby is a keen-minded little fellow who is never at a loss for words; this time, though, he said nothing . . . but he made that fellow a special hotcake, cooking it long and slow, and with special ingredients. It was so tough, when served, that you not only couldn't eat it, you couldn't even cut it.

While Bobby was enjoying his laugh, the hardware merchant set about turning the tables. He got hold of a couple of medicine bottle stickers and pasted them on the hotcake. On one he wrote a Fairbanks address, and on the other this message: "Bob Sheldon is our cook, the food is fine, here is a sample." Then he put a stamp on the hotcake and sent it through the mail unwrapped. It arrived in Fairbanks without a nick on it and was exhibited all around town. There was talk of putting it in a museum.

Bobby did get one of his creations into a museum—the University of Alaska Museum. One of the first objects you'll see as you enter this museum is an ancient and strange-looking automobile with this sign: "First Automobile Built in Alaska. Built by Robert Sheldon in Skagway, 1905."

"How did you come to build that automobile?" I asked Bobby. "Had you ever seen one before?"

"I built it on account of a girl," he said, "and all I knew about automobiles was what I read in papers from the States.

"There was this beautiful girl there in Skagway, and I was trying to beat another fellow's time. He was the son of a banker and had the use of his father's horse and buggy, which was a luxury in Skagway in those days. I wasn't faring so well. I didn't have a horse and buggy, and had no immediate prospects of getting either. I was interested in mechanics, and being on the night shift at the Skagway power house I had considerable time to think it over. It was my job to make all kinds of emergency repairs on the equipment.

"One night I got the idea of building one of those gasoline engine-powered buggies I had been reading about—a contraption I felt would dazzle the young lady.

"My funds were limited but I finally located four buggy wheels and built a frame on them. I salvaged an old marine engine from a deserted boat, put some gears in it and made a chain drive. I tested the thing late one night when no one was around. It really worked. So I fixed the seat real nice and called on my girl with the

latest style in transporation—the one and only automobile in all Alaska. The girl went with me on many rides.”

Then Bobby stopped talking. “Did you marry the girl, Bobby?”

“No,” he said, “but three other fellows have married her since then.”

Bobby is one of these jack-of-all-trades people. He has many firsts to his credit. In addition to the Territory’s first auto, he was the first man to drive an automobile (not his original) over the three hundred miles of terrible dirt road from Fairbanks to Valdez. He did not relish the idea of driving back over this road, so sold his car, bought a bicycle and pedalled back . . . thereby becoming the first person to ride a bicycle from Valdez to Fairbanks.

At the age of fifteen, in 1898, Bobby was the first newsboy in Skagway to sell a newspaper to the notorious bandit, Soapy Smith. “Soapy always gave me a dollar for his paper,” Bobby said. “The regular price was two bits. As you can imagine, I was very sorry when the vigilantes shot Soapy.”

There are some things about Alaska that pass for humor “Outside” (anywhere outside Alaska), but are really far from funny to an Alaskan. Among these are the stories about “cabin fever,” that disorder of the mind caused by being too much a prisoner of the winter inside cabin walls. The most famous of these stories, I guess, concerns two prospectors on the trail of ‘98 who had built a boat on the shores of Lake Bennett to take them down to the Yukon, only to have the lake freeze up before they could get going. So they put up a cabin and prepared to stay the winter. Along in the cold dark days of February they got so much on each other’s nerves that they divided up all their stores and food; they then went outside their cabin and sawed their boat in two. In the spring, I’m told, they had to be taken into custody. For years tourists going by on White Pass & Yukon trains could see the two halves of that boat, and laugh about it. I’m sure they wouldn’t if they could ever see the pitiful condition of the poor creatures afflicted with this disorder. Sometimes they recover but more often they spend the rest of their lives in an institution.

The first fall I was in the park I met two highly sane and rational old-timers, Sam Federson and Charlie Christenson, who were trapping and prospecting near the northern boundary. While hunting for their winter’s meat, they wounded a bear. Federson was

following his trail in about two inches of snow with Christenson about a hundred feet behind, both evidently unfamiliar with the habits of bears; the animal, as wounded bears do, had doubled back on his tracks lying in wait in the brush about twenty-five feet from the trail. When Federson came up, the bear sprang on him and knocked him to the ground. Federson shouted at Christenson to shoot, but with Sam and the bear thrashing around, it was some time before he could get in a shot without hitting Sam. He finally managed to shoot the bear through the head, but not before Sam's own head had been badly chewed. The sight was a shock to Charlie.

Sam recovered; but one day ten years later, when Ranger John Rumohr was stationed at the Lower Toklat cabin, Sam hurried up and asked John to come to his cabin to help take care of Christenson.

"He's gone crazy," Sam said. When John got there he found Christenson completely deranged. He had used up most of his rifle ammunition shooting at the moon, which he said was an evil spirit. John stayed with them a week and Christenson seemed to return to normal. Two weeks later, Sam and Charlie hiked out to Fairbanks where a doctor, apparently unfamiliar with this Alaska malady, examined Christenson and pronounced him fully recovered. The two returned to their cabin for the winter.

One day the headquarters phone rang, and the U.S. Marshal at Nenana reported that Christenson had gone crazy again; that he had said he'd killed Federson, then gone over to the ranger cabin and killed Rumohr. He was being held at Knight's Roadhouse on the Kuskokwim mail trail northwest of the park.

The superintendent told two of us to hike the seventy miles to the Lower Taklat cabin and find out what had happened; but before we could get started John Rumohr telephoned from Upper Toklat that he was on his way in. He had not seen Christenson. I therefore set out for Knight's Roadhouse.

This place was run by two hale and hearty sourdoughs named Henry Knight, 66 years old at that time, and Jim Burroughs, 72. When I got to the roadhouse the Marshal's deputies had already collected Christenson. Henry Knight told me what had happened.

"One afternoon I heard the dogs bark, and saw Christenson coming up the trail on snowshoes with his rifle slung over his

shoulder Jim went out to meet him and I heard him say, 'Hello, Charlie. How's everything up in your neck of the woods?'

"Charlie said, 'Just fine. I killed Sam yesterday and this morning I killed the park ranger at Toklat cabin.'

"One look was enough to tell me Christenson was crazy as a bed-bug. I opened the door and said, as casual as I could, 'Come on in, Charlie, and have a cup of coffee. Leave your gun outside by the door where the moisture won't condense on it.'

"Well, Charlie came in, and as soon as he could Jim Burroughs sneaked out, unloaded Christenson's gun and hid it. Then, while old Charlie was drinking his coffee, the two of us jumped him, got him overpowered and tied up. That was all there was to it."

An hour later seventy-two-year-old Jim Burroughs was on his way to Nenana, a 46-mile hike, to notify the U.S. Marshal's office. The Marshal ordered two of his deputies to investigate Federson and Christenson's cabin before picking up Christenson.

They found Federson lying face down in front of his cabin with a hole in his back, killed by the friend who had once saved his life. At the ranger cabin they found tracks in the snow showing that Christenson had been there; fortunately John Rumohr had left several days before.

The deputies took Christenson to Fairbanks, where he was formally judged insane and sent to an asylum. I still have an idea that doctor could have saved Sam Federson's life, if he had known a little more about the disease called "cabin fever."

Old sourdoughs who simply wandered off the trail and got lost were almost as much of a problem as those who came down with cabin fever. These old boys have a tremendous pride in their ability to take care of themselves under any circumstances, and the last thing they'd admit was that they were now too old for the rugged life they had always lived. Such a one was Tom Kenney, a white-haired prospector who showed up at headquarters one August with his Negro partner, Tom Black, two pack horses and a map showing what purported to be the location of a rich lost mine in the McKinley River country. So, although old Tom seemed run down, and had an infection in his leg, we decided—against our better judgment—to let him head for his lost mine with his partner.

Two weeks later Tom Black came trudging down the trail, in a

sorry condition physically and mentally. It was some time before we could get the whole story out of him.

It seems he and old Tom had been travelling from Clearwater Creek to Muddy River along the base of Mt. McKinley when, as so often happens in the shadow of Denali, clouds began to gather, bringing sudden sleet and rain. The two wanted to make the timber country on Muddy and tried to hurry, but before they got to the summit between the streams Kenney, because of his leg infection, had begun to fall behind. After talking it over in the rain, the two decided that Balck should go ahead, set up camp and start a fire, and Kenney would come on at his slow pace.

Black said, "I made camp in the timber and waited. When Tom didn't show up, I went back to meet him. It was raining hard—I couldn't see more than twenty feet. I searched around for two days, then I knew I'd have to come back here and get the rangers to help me. Please find him!"

By coincidence, another old-timer named Keeler, headed for park headquarters from the Kantishna, was ten days overdue. The superintendent sent Fritz Nyberg back with Tom Black to search for Kenney, and told him to keep a sharp eye out for the other missing man. Fritz and Black hiked the ninety miles out to Black's camp, covered the country thoroughly but found no trace of old Tom. They came back to headquarters to restock with grub just as another party of rangers, including me, were making preparations to search for the second overdue prospector.

The party, consisting of Fritz, Lee Swisher and myself, all old hands, and one new ranger, John Rumohr, were confident that we could find anyone or anything above ground in that park.

Our party divided at Stony Creek; Lee and John cut off down the creek toward the ranger's cabin where they hoped to find Keeler, if he had had strength to go any distance at all. It was for just such cases as this that we had built shelter cabins at likely spots. We were just finishing off lunch when Lee came back with the news that they had found Keeler at the cabin, but he was out of his head and didn't remember how long he had been there. They had given him a hot drink and a light lunch. John Rumohr was staying with the old man to wait for a horse to bring him out.

There was no cabin near where Tom Kenney had disappeared. We knew every day counted if we were to find him. At the deserted camp at Clearwater Creek we found no trace, and moved on over the tundra to Muddy River where we camped to make a search in all directions. The weather was cloudy and rainy. After criss-crossing the country for ten days, we were sure there was only one other way Kenney could have wandered—downhill along the Clearwater toward the McKinley River Bar. Sure enough. We had not travelled far when Fritz found an old raincoat hanging on a willow near where he had made camp; a quarter mile farther down the creek we found the body.

While we were waiting for the inquest we dug and fenced in a little grave, and as we were doing this these lines ran through my head: "Here lie the bones of old Tom Kenney. He took one prospecting trip too many." But I guess that even dead, Tom Kenney would not have considered that a correct epitaph.

With the coming of airplanes to the wilderness it got to be considerably easier to find lost people, and rescue sick ones. Those Alaska bush pilots brought with them their own tricks of their special trade, starting in 1923 with Carl Ben Eielson and his summer mail run between Fairbanks and the Kuskokwim gold diggings three hundred miles southwest. Eielson was always making emergency landings without benefit of field. In the summer of '24 he brought a passenger—a prospector in a great hurry to strike it rich—out to the Copper Mountain diggings. Ben was flying an old World War I Jenny. He had no idea of where he was going to land, but he buzzed the gravel bar near the north point of copper Mountain, decided a landing was feasible, and set his little plane down in a skillful though bumpy landing on the flood-water-constructed landing field. The stunt was greeted with great acclaim by the miners, and became a legend in bush-pilot landings; in 1929, when Eielson was killed in a crash, Copper Mountain was re-named Mt. Eielson in honor of Ben and his feat.

The most exciting—and perhaps the most risky—of these random landings by carefree bush pilots was one pulled off by Jerry Jones of Fairbanks.

Early in May, 1932, another pilot, Joe Crosson, had landed a party on Muldrow Glacier, 5,600 feet up on the side of Mt. McKinley, using a plane with new-fangled equipment—skis instead

of wheels. Three weeks later, an emergency radio message came in to Fairbanks that one of the men up there on the glacier was seriously ill and had to be flown out.

During the three weeks, the snow had melted off the field in Fairbanks. A consultation was held immediately between the Fairbanks Fire Department and the only pilot available at the moment, Jerry Jones. As a result of this, the fire department came clanging out to the landing field with hoses, pump and water wagon, and sprayed that field until it was all mud. Jerry then whooshed the ski plane through the slop until it was airborne, flew to Mt. McKinley and picked up the sick man waiting in a tent on the glacier. His splasho return landing is probably the only one on record ever accomplished in a man-made mud pie.

One of the really spectacular bush pilot tricks of getting about I first saw performed by Bud Branham in a little float plane. He was on Lake Hood, a small body of water near Anchorage; this lake is connected by a canal to another little lake called Spenard. There is not a long enough run, going straight, for a plane to get off the water . . . so Bud Branham began gunning his plane around that lake in a circle until he finally got up enough speed so the tail lifted and he was "up on the step." He then straightened out, went snorting through the canal and was airborne. I've since seen other pilots pull off this same pinwheel take-off in cramped quarters. I understand it was first done on Lake Hood by Ray Peterson, an old-time bush pilot now president of Northern Consolidated Airlines.

Chris Christensen was one of the most ingenious of Alaska's bush pilots. He used to fly a regular run between Anchorage and Seward—a distance of only eighty miles down the Kenai Peninsula, but over some of the most rugged mountain country, and through some of the dirtiest, foggiest weather in that part of Alaska. Incidentally, his route took him over four big glaciers between the Kenai Range peaks. Chris noticed that every time he flew over those glaciers he felt a strong down draft, a real "hole in the air." Chris began to take time and altitude measurements and before long he was flying between Anchorage and Seward in the thickest pea soup fog, suddenly appearing over the Seward airfield out of nowhere.

"This is all I did," Chris said. "I simply phoned Seward and made sure I had at least a 200-foot ceiling. Then I took off, climbed high

enough so I'd clear the mountains easy, and headed south in the fog. I knew I'd hit the first down draft in around fifteen minutes, the next ten minutes later, and so on. After I felt that fourth hole in the air I knew Seward was only a few minutes away, and started angling her down."

That was all there was to it. Easy for a man who flew with his head as well as the seat of his pants. Of all the means of transportation in this northern country . . . wings, wheels, paws, snowshoes . . . airplanes were certainly the most spectacular, and it wasn't long before I was itching to know more about them.



Warnings I Didn't Heed

HARRY KARSTENS HAD A TEMPER that could erupt like a volcano. One time in the fall of '28 he got into an argument with Fritz Nyberg, which had begun as a simple discussion of where to put up a cabin. It built up until Harry flared out and told his Chief Ranger he was fired and he'd better get off park property. Instead of waiting until Harry calmed down, Fritz got; but he sent an appeal over Karstens' head to his superiors in the park service, citing the civil service regulation that a man cannot be fired without just and due cause.

Fritz won, whereupon Harry Karstens said, "If he stays . . . I quit!" He then walked out of the superintendent's office, for good.

This was the situation when I arrived at park headquarters on Thanksgiving day. I had written a letter from my post out on the McKinley River which I expected would cause considerable stir at headquarters. It was addressed to Harry, and in it I outlined the idea that had been pounding around in my head, for patrolling the park by airplane instead of by foot or dog sled; I wound it up by saying, "I know you cannot give me a leave of absence to go Outside and learn to fly, but that is what I want to do. So I would like to quit for a while, to do this. I guess I'd better make it official, Harry, so you might call this letter my resignation, effective Dec. 1."

In my cabin on the McKinley I had pondered that word "resignation" for quite a while. Unless Harry refused to accept it, it was as final as a parachute jump. It meant moving out, with a strong possibility that I wouldn't be allowed to come back and put my plan to work. But it seemed to me I wasn't getting ahead so very fast by staying where I was. I had been with the park service almost three years, and was still getting \$1,860 a year, out of which I had to

board myself. I had prowled the park from end to end, but had had no chance to climb McKinley, and didn't see any coming up in the future. Fact was, although I didn't admit it to myself, I was a young fellow honing for a change of scene and a little excitement. I was ready to see more of Alaska, and I knew flying was the best way to do it; I'd flown as a passenger half a dozen times, seeing at one look country it had taken me a day to hike through.

My letter had caused only a ripple at headquarters. Fritz Nyberg, who was in charge until a new superintendent took over, said flatly, "Grant, you're making a mistake. This park doesn't need airplanes. They'd probably stampede all the wild life and they sure wouldn't add to the natural look of the place. What this park needs is rangers like you. Why don't you stick around anyway until the new super gets here?"

This would simply mean I'd have to go through the same argument with another man, and maybe the new superintendent would persuade me to give up my plan. So I thanked Fritz for his kind words, helped to polish off a delicious Thanksgiving turkey headquarters had provided, then packed my duffel and swung aboard the train for Seward. I had a picture in my mind of the airfields I'd seen around Seattle, with signs on the hangars reading "LEARN TO FLY! Dual Instruction, \$20 an hour . . . Solo Time, \$15 an hour."

At Seward I met a slender, quiet man with a sharp-featured, inquisitive look—Harry J. Lick, the new McKinley superintendent. He seemed startled to find one of his rangers had already quit, and when I told him why, he said, "I think what McKinley needs, Pearson, is not airplanes, but tourists. I come from Yellowstone, and you'd be amazed at what a big flow of tourists can do for a park when it comes time to put appropriations through." He gave me a quick, questioning glance. "Pearson, I'm going to need good men. If you ever want to come back, let me know."

Words of advice, friendly offers . . . I was a young man in no mood to pay attention to them. Nor to the first real warning from, I suppose, my harassed guardian angel. This came when I had been in Seattle only a week.

I had started my flight and ground school work at a field south of town near Renton, not far from the small Boeing airplane plant.

I was working on the side stacking lumber at a sawmill—but the scent of sawdust didn't have the lure for me it used to have; my nostrils were filled with the exciting, special aroma of burning engine oil. In the rambling boarding house I had found near the airfield I met an engineer who was working on a new power plant being built by the Puget Sound Power & Light Company. He said, "Pearson, I need a set of air photos of that plant. I gather you have something to do with flying. How about fifty dollars for half a dozen photographs?"

Now it happened that I'd met a fellow Alaskan at the field, Bill Gill from Anchorage, a flier who was trying to put in flight time to get his commercial license. I said to the engineer, "It's a deal," and next day offered Bill ten dollars to take me and my camera over the power plant.

"Fine," said Bill. "That'll pay for the gas and oil." I began to have a heightened opinion of myself as a business man.

The first sunny morning, we took off in the Travel-Air Bill was using—an open cockpit 3-place biplane. I was in the larger front seat, which gave me a chance to swing from side to side with my camera. Once aloft, Seattle spread out below us, piled up on its hills between Lake Washington and the Sound; I tried a distance shot of the Bremerton ferry pencilling a white wake in Elliott Bay, and then we were over the power plant, circling at 300 feet. I got pictures from every angle, and was getting set for a final shot when our engine quit. Bill banked the Travel-Air sharply to get her lined up for the airfield. He turned too flat; the plane stalled and fell off into a tailspin.

We made one turn in the spin, when a wing smacked against a tall cottonwood. The tree snapped into three pieces, which broke our fall and saved our lives. However, when we slammed into the ground my safety belt broke, the engine was pushed back into the cockpit and I was knocked unconscious.

Two men who were cutting wood saw the crash and ran to help. Bill, better protected in the rear cockpit, was merely jarred; he was able to help our two rescuers haul me out of the smoking wreckage.

I was shipped to the Renton hospital, and when I came to six hours later I had a bad gash on my forehead, a cracked rib, and a

banged-up camera with, however, its films intact. I stayed in the hospital a week, which ate up most of the fifty bucks I got for the pictures.

The second warning came to me in the form of a notice I read one morning pasted up in the rain-spattered hangar window. "Going out of business . . . offered for sale by creditors, one biplane" and so on. The outfit had gone broke. As I read, it seemed strange to me that I had been able to pick the one company that had managed to go bust, in a business that had seemed to be in a state of extraordinary boom ever since Lindbergh's flight the year before. In fact, it had been difficult to find an outfit that would take me on at anything like a reasonable price. While I was standing there thinking things over, a red-headed fellow-student named Bill Dwyer came up, read the notice and shrugged. "Tough luck."

"Tough on us, too. Where do we find another flying school that operates without taking a man's shirt and a half interest in his pants?"

Bill considered this. "Not around here," he said. "But there's one in Chehalis. The St. John air school."

"Chehalis?"

"That's a little town ninety miles south of here. Got an aunt lives there."

Next morning the two of us threw our suitcases on top of a mud-splashed Portland-Seattle bus and headed south.

E. A. St. John, who ran the school on the farm-surrounded Chehalis airfield, was also the local Ford dealer. This was a break for Bill and me. We picked up welcome side money driving his cars down from Seattle. It was also, I believe, the reason St. John was such a stickler for giving his students thorough mechanical training. One morning at the hangar Bill was washing his hands in gasoline, being exactly as greasy as I was. "We are supposed to be learning navigation and principles of aerodynamics," he remarked, "but as nearly as I can make out, we spend half our time taking these damned engines apart. I could do it in my sleep. In fact, that's when I'd rather do it."

"Every pilot his own mechanic," I said. "And that's fine with me. I'll have no money to pay grease monkeys."

"I want to be there, Grant, when you decide to change piston rings in flight. But not in the same plane."

One day after close to six months on and above that Chehalis airfield, I said to Bill, "this time, my jinx is licked for sure. A week more and I get my limited license."

"Good. Can you fly with your fingers crossed?"

Next day I was handed a warning that was as blunt as the side of a cliff. I was soloing in a Waco 9, an open cockpit biplane. I was up to practice getting out of stalls and tailspins, this being a big part of the test for a pilot's license.

In a stall—if you don't happen to remember the flying circus days when it was part of the standard program over the county fairgrounds—the nose of the plane drops straight down; you neutralize elevators and ailerons, and as soon as you get enough speed to allow the controls to function again, you pull her out, losing about 200 feet of elevation in the maneuver. In a tailspin, the plane drops off from a stall on one wing, and rotates in sharp circles headed for the ground. To recover, you neutralize the controls; the plane comes out pretty much of its own accord, with a few gentle touches on the stick and rudder.

I climbed to 4,000 feet, tried a couple of stalls and had no trouble recovering. I went into another stall and kicked the rudder bar, which put me into a tailspin. I let the plane spin three complete turns, losing about 750 feet, then pushed forward on the stick to neutralize the control. This stick was wood, and fitted into a metal socket.

The stick came out in my hands. I couldn't get it to socket back in, and found myself spinning around with the piece of equipment that makes an airplane behave now so much highly polished kindling in my hands. I tried kicking the rudder in the opposite direction from the spin. Nothing happened. I threw the stick overboard, leaned down and grabbed hold of the socket.

I managed to get the controls into neutral. The plane came out of the spin, did a wing-over and began flying in a steep glide—upside down.

By this time I was 500 feet from the ground, too close to try to right the plane. I suppose the fact that I was in that silly, upside-down position prevented me from being as scared as I should have been. The whole business became completely unreal . . . I felt like a spectator at an interesting but utterly impractical experiment.

My glide was taking me toward a plowed field. When I got about a hundred feet from it I reached down—up, rather—and pulled the stabilizer; the Waco flattened out, stalled and dropped 25 feet into the furrows with a slithering whack. My head jerked forward and got a deep cut from the plane's compass; something else broke three of my ribs.

The farmers who pulled me out of that plane said they had never seen anything like it, and hoped never to again—a plane coming in with its wheels straight up in the air, like a dead duck.

I got off with two weeks in the hospital and a large doctor bill to pay. But I was within a few hours of getting my limited commercial license, which would entitle me to carry passengers on sightseeing trips, and go anywhere myself, carrying freight if I could get any. When I showed up at the hangar with a bandage still around my head, Bill waved and called, "Hi! Flapjack Pearson, they call him—he turns over in mid-air and comes down on his back. How much am I offered not to go up to Alaska and tell that story?"

"Nothing. But I will offer you something, in spades, if you do show up and tell it. Now stand back and avoid the prop wash while I go after that license."

Brave words, but before I could check out the remaining flying time I had to have, my money gave out.

This I considered a purely temporary setback. However, in August of 1929 jobs had become hard to get in Washington . . . in the lumber business, and in farming, they seemed to be running off a preview of the crash. I also began to wake up to the idea that if I were going to save up for another stake, the place to do it was away from towns and cities with their temptations to spend money as fast as you make it.

At this point, seated in my room with a lot of figures on a pad in front of me, I said, "Grant, you dope, put your pride in your pocket where you know it will be safe, and write to the man." So I wrote a letter to Superintendent Liek at McKinley, asking to have my job back. Then, banking on his offer in Seward, I went straight up to Seattle and got on a boat for Alaska. This time, steerage.

It was a great let-down, of course. But heck, I said to myself, when you're out of cash, what can you do? And on that steamer plowing through the smooth waters of the Inside Passage, and finally nudging the dock at mountain-ringed Seward, I began to

feel better about what I was doing. The smell of friendly country is always good. And I told myself I'd be returning to get that flying license—this time, moreover, I'd make enough of stake so I could buy a plane of my own as soon as I got the license.

A new regulation had just been put into effect requiring pilots up for a license to have a thorough physical check up. I planned to take the examination in Fairbanks, and later did, flexing every muscle on request, feeling I was in the best shape I'd ever been in.

With the official report of that examination my guardian angel delivered his final warning and it finally took effect. My vision was impaired; faulty distance perception. I think it must have come from one of those cracks in the head I'd taken in my crash landings.

"A license cannot be granted," the report added, "to anyone wearing glasses." Like it or not—except for "pleasure" flying, which I had no intention of doing—I had become a man with both feet on the ground.

But when I got off the boat at Seward, I had no thought of the examination or its results. I was busy sniffing the familiar odors of an Alaska harbor, compounded of fish, spruce, and glacier-cooled breezes. Going by train from Seward to McKinley, though, I found I wasn't quite as familiar with the country as I thought I was.

Most of the passengers were newcomers, and the chief topic of conversation was mosquitoes. "Are they as bad as we've heard?" "Can they really kill a man?" "Should we have brought mosquito netting?" I gave them calm assurance that the stories about Alaska mosquitoes were much exaggerated, and that now in August they were practically gone. There was no need to waste time buying mosquito netting when the train stopped in Anchorage.

As our train pulled into McKinley station I could see Maurice Marino at the door of his roadhouse, ready to receive guests; I saw Bobby Sheldon standing beside a fleet of three new red buses, ready to take tourists out to Savage River camp. I also saw something else; everyone waiting there at the station was wearing mosquito netting draped over his head. I sneaked off the train on the opposite side.

It was one of those "worst-in-20-years" seasons for mosquitoes. Billions more of them, and they hung on longer. Bobby Sheldon said to me next day, "Those tourists got a bum steer. Some fellow

who seemed to know what he was talking about told 'em not to bother with nets." I said, "Some people talk too much," and said nothing further.

I was startled by all the activity in the spruce groves at headquarters in the eight months I'd been gone. New log buildings put up; a water system being laid; a new guide and lecture service installed for tourists. When I walked into the superintendent's office Harry Liek had just finished reading the letter I'd written him in Chehalis. It had come up on the train with me. He studied me quietly for a moment.

"Grant, I'm glad you're back. But right now, I don't have a vacancy on my ranger force. However, you see what's being done around here; I need good men laying my water system, too. How about working by the day, until something opens up?"

"Well, guess I shouldn't be fussy. I came here to work."

Next day I started out again as a day laborer, a shovel over my shoulder. A parka squirrel gave me a chattering greeting and a welcoming flick of his tail; a mother ptarmigan paused in herding her brood to tell me "Come 'ere . . . Come 'ere;" I sank my shovel into the dirt, and the August sun beat gently on my shoulders.

In a month I was reappointed a permanent ranger, the appointment coinciding with the beginning of the hunting season. My first job was to go out with Fritz Nyberg on a patrol of the park's north boundary, watching out for illegal hunting. We tramped with packs on our backs to the Ewe Creek country. It was good to get out with the wind hitting my face, stretching my legs and placing my feet expertly next to the tundra hummocks that had so infuriated me as a cheechako. Fall had her brilliant colors out like flags; the white Dall sheep dotting the crags gave little bounding dances of welcome as we passed, and antlered caribou nodded in stately greeting. A grizzly digging for ground squirrels near the Savage River looked up, eyed me, and gave a friendly grunt. It was good to be back.

10



Citizens of the Tundra

NOT THAT I TRUSTED THE FRIENDLINESS in that grizzly's greeting. By this time I had had those fellows as neighbors long enough to know that when you come upon a Toklat grizzly you can be sure of just one thing: the unexpected is most likely to happen.

I learned this lesson early. My first spring in the park I was packing in supplies to my trail-building camp, when I heard the sharp barking of a fox; I made a turn around a knoll and spotted something light brown just over the rise. I dropped out of sight and unlimbered my camera. A good fox photo was a prize worth having.

I picked my route carefully, keeping behind cover in a low crouch. Finally I got in position and stood up straight, camera at the ready. I then saw the rest of the animal I thought had been a fox.

Not over sixty feet from me was a gigantic mass of light-colored fur, shoulder muscles humping furiously in an attempt to dig out a ground squirrel. I stood there frozen, staring at this enormous creature—a huge grizzly.

It was a couple of seconds before the bear saw me and forgot all about his ground squirrel. He squinted his small eyes, concentrating on identifying his visitor, at the same time moving quickly to circle me at about thirty feet.

I came out of my freeze and looked hastily around. There wasn't a tree within a mile, even if I gave myself the benefit of the doubt on winning a footrace with a grizzly. All I could think of was, "It's up to him. I won't move first."

The bear suddenly reared up on his hind legs and stood with eyes blinking and nose puckering as he analyzed the scent of cheechako steak. I guess he didn't like what he smelled. He

grunted, dropped down to all fours and ambled off at a highly satisfactory speed.

Only then did I think of the camera in my hands, still at the ready. I had missed what might have been the world's best grizzly picture.

I'll never know why that bear didn't charge me. I don't think it had anything to do with the sight of the camera eye aimed at him, because a park tourist named Yokel later got himself into the same fix with exactly opposite results. He came with two friends named Sanderson and Sweeney for the express purpose of photographing wild life. The three were rooting around in the high foothills when Yokel saw a grizzly stroll over a hill near the last timber, and disappear. He gave chase, getting his camera ready for a fast shot. The other two followed, but Yokel was soon out of sight over the hill.

He came back into view running at top speed and yelling "Bear!" This was hardly necessary; the grizzly was only a few feet behind him. At this sight Sweeney went into a sprint down the hill; Sanderson ducked into a thicket out of sight.

Yokel jumped into a spruce as if he had been on a springboard, scrambling up the thick branches, leaving parts of his clothing behind. He was counting on the fact that the Toklat, like other grizzlies, is unable to climb trees because of his straight claws and enormous weight.

What Yokel didn't count on was the Toklat's great height. The bear lumbered up to the tree, stood up and began to claw at Yokel's legs, which were well within reach.

Sanderson saw this, crouched down still further in the thicket and let out a tremendous yell. The grizzly paused, stared uncertainly in Sanderson's direction, then abruptly came down on all fours and began to go back the way he had come. Yokel scrambled higher into the tree.

The rustling of branches caught the bear's ear. He turned around and contemplated Yokel perched in the tree like a badly-designed bird. After a moment he gave a general growl at the whole vicinity and shambled back over his hill.

Yokel's bear had charged. Mine hadn't. I'll never know why—but it taught me never to take a grizzly for granted.

There are two kinds of bears in the park. The small back bears are not often seen, because they live in the trees and brush below

timberline and generally succeed in keeping out of view of humans. The most common sight is the big Toklat grizzly, who lives most of the time above timberline. Toklats are a variety of grizzly found only in the mountains of the Alaska Range. They weigh anywhere from 350 to 1,000 pounds, vary in color from light—almost white—to dark brown, and have the usual grizzly characteristics: dished face, prominent hump over the shoulders, long, nearly straight claws. Toklats live chiefly on above-timberline berries, roots and green plants—although they eat meat when they get the chance, and will spend an hour or more digging out a ground squirrel. They also delight in robbing the carefully prepared food caches of wolves, foxes, coyotes . . . even men. A trapper's cabin after a hungry grizzly has broken in is an awesome and pitiful sight. Bears will wreck everything in a cabin, even a cast-iron stove. Cans are slashed open, bed clothing ripped to shreds, furniture splintered, and usually there is a coating of flour over the whole place.

Grizzlies mate every two years, and the cubs are born during hibernation. At birth they are only about the size of a man's fist, and mamma doesn't even know she has had them until she wakes up in the spring to find her children placidly feeding at her breasts. Litters range from one to three, twins being the most common. The yearling cubs go into hibernation with their mother the next winter, after which the mother turns them loose to shift for themselves. The following spring she appears with a new family.

I have found there are three situations that will cause a grizzly to attack humans. The first, if you seem to be tampering with his food supply; these bears not only have their huge size to keep nourished, they have only about five months to fatten themselves up for their mid-October to April hibernation. They therefore will not put up with interference in their meals.

The second cause for a grizzly's declaring war is if he is attacked or wounded. He is cunning in counter-attack; when wounded he will back-track along his trail, hide in the brush and ambush his pursuer.

The most common cause of danger to humans is when a mother bear decides her cubs are in peril. Once, travelling up a creek, I noticed two grizzly cubs playing in the creek bottom near timberline. I scanned the neighborhood for their mother; apparently she was not close by, so I carefully crept up to photographic range.

Next minute there was a crashing in the brush and a full-grown grizzly was charging me.

Fortunately there was a tree nearby and I just had time to shinny up it. Mamma came to the foot of the tree, stood on her hind legs, sniffed and growled; then she called her cubs and the family departed.

When travelling cross-country in the hills there is always this danger of surprising a mother with her cubs. This happened to a friend of mine named Jack Reed (no relation to the Greenwich Village Reed) who was with a party making a geologic study in the Alaska Range.

Jack was several hundred feet in advance of his two companions when he topped a slight rise on a barren ridge and found himself twenty feet from two adult grizzlies and a small cub. One of the big bears charged him. Jack spun around and ran down hill, the big grizzly in pursuit. Directly in front of them was a straight 25-foot drop over a rock cliff. Jack hesitated for an instant; the bear made up his mind for him with one swipe of a paw. Jack jumped. The bear didn't follow him over the cliff, but went around it. Jack landed unhurt in some thick willows, and quickly worked his way back to the ridge, with the bear crashing through the brush in full chase. On the ridge Jack ran pell-mell downhill again. Looking over his shoulder, he saw that the bear had almost caught up with him.

He suddenly sidestepped parallel to the slope. The bear couldn't make the turn, tried to put on the brakes and tumbled fifty feet before he finally halted.

Jack joined his partners. They all yelled and threw rocks down at the bear, who circled around them, growling and making motions to attack. Finally he shambled off after the other bear and cub. He had left his warning to stay away from cubs in the form of three claw slashes in Jack's back.

I've been asked if the Toklat grizzlies of McKinley are related to the Kodiak species, and it always confuses people when I say, "No—but you see, there is no such species as the Kodiak bear." I then have to go on and explain that in general, there are four kinds of bears in North America: black, grizzly, polar and Alaska brown. The brown bears are the biggest bears in the world, weighing up to 2,000 pounds, and include those on Kodiak Island and neighboring

Katmai National Monument. They are found all along the Alaska coast from Juneau to Kiska, but have never been seen in the colder inland zone north of the Alaska Range. One time when my ranger duties took me to Katmai near the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, I made much too close acquaintance with these giants.

A bush pilot had landed me one evening with a camping outfit on the beach at the Monument's Naknek Lake, outside the volcanic area. From the plane we had seen what looked like a number of bear trails, but no bears. (We weren't looking for them anyway; I was there to investigate the sulphurous volcanic fissures called "smokes.")

There was driftwood on the beach and I built a big fire, hoping the coals would remain most of the night and drive off any bears that might come around.

About midnight I was wakened by a loud splashing. There was good moonlight, and I could make out a big bear in the lake. He appeared to be hitting the water with his paw, but he was undoubtedly trying to catch salmon. After one of the swipes he bit at the water, came up with a fish and walked out on the beach with it.

I had seen enough for the time being. There stood the largest bear I had ever met, less than a hundred and fifty feet away. I thought, "After the fish course, maybe he will want something bigger to eat." I got out my six shooter, then made a practice climb of a quaking aspen near the corner of the tent. I found I could climb it quickly. (The brown bear, like the grizzly, can't climb trees.)

Working cautiously, I soon had my fire blazing. As it flared up, the bear snorted and came toward it. I got ready to climb the tree, then fired in the air with the six shooter. In the still night it sounded like a cannon. The bear let out a woof and disappeared into the forest. I made coffee and while I drank it, I could hear other bears splashing along the lake shore. I kept up the fire, the bears sniffed and snorted. Finally things seemed to have quieted down, and I went back to sleep, but not in the tent. If another bear came along I didn't want to get tangled up inside.

In the morning I investigated the remains of the fish, and followed the bear tracks. I found I had set up my tent right across a main bear trail. Apparently these huge fellows did not mind making a detour—unlike some of their grizzly cousins in McKinley.

I'm convinced that nowhere on the North American continent can you see as great a variety of wild life in as short a time as you can in the tundras, crags and woods of Mt. McKinley National Park. On view are 37 different species of mammals, ranging in size from the Alaska moose, the largest, to the tiny pigmy shrew, weighing in at a few ounces. There are also 122 species of birds in the park in summer, fifteen of which stay the year around.

As for all these creatures' food supply, there are hundreds of kinds of flowering and seed-bearing plants; dozens of varieties of grasses and brush for browse, including more than thirty kinds of willows, from tiny dwarf bushes above timberline to tall trees along the river bottoms; and nearly fifty kinds of alpine mosses. The stunted black spruce growing in boggy meadows is a favorite haunt of moose, and the dense shade of higher white spruce groves forms a protective coloration for black bears and timber wolves alike.

My friend Adolph Murie of the Fish and Wildlife Service has made a study of McKinley's timber wolves, and will tell you that while the Toklat grizzlies are the most dangerous of the park's meat-eating animals, the wolves see to it that grizzlies do not take over the privileges of absolute monarchy. He cites this story to prove it. He had been observing a wolf den on an open point above the East Fork of the Toklat River. From a ridge across the river he took census through field glasses, and found in residence five adult wolves and six cubs just old enough to tumble about the entrance to the den. One morning around 10 a.m. one of the wolves trotted up to the den with food in his jaws. It could have been a chunk of caribou he had killed. He was greeted by the other four with much enthusiastic tail-wagging.

While the wolves were bunched together a grizzly loomed up on the hillside above the den. As it came down wind it threw up its nose and sniffed, apparently smelling both meat and wolves.

The wolves did not see the bear until it was within a hundred yards. Then they did not hesitate. They all galloped toward the grizzly and began a slashing guerrilla attack, one wolf darting in for a quick nip from behind as another jumped back. The bear made furious two-armed lunges, apparently trying to catch a wolf in both paws. This lasted about twenty minutes; slash . . . lunge . . . slash . . . then a short retreat by the grizzly until he was nipped again and flailed out. Finally the bear began a new retreat,

this time on the double into a marsh. The wolves, apparently feeling they had made their point, trotted back to their interrupted brunch.

It would have been a different matter for the wolf family if that grizzly had had a cub somewhere nearby.

Once, returning from a patrol trip out in the park, I rounded a bend in the trail and came upon two timber wolves that had cornered a cow moose and her twin calves. The moose had herded her calves against a high gravel bank, so the wolves were forced to attack from one side only. Each time they closed in she lashed at them with her forefeet, one lightning-fast kick sending a wolf rolling twenty-five feet. The wolves circled; the mother kept a wary eye on them. The two wolves worked as a team, one making a feint to attack from one angle, the other then leaping in from the opposite corner.

This jumping, slashing fight lasted three quarters of an hour. Then, with a couple of final snarls, the wolves retreated, one of them limping badly. The mother moose turned back to her calves, which had been shivering quietly through it all; she let them nurse reassuringly.

The Alaska moose is the largest member of the deer family, sometimes weighing as much as 1,600 pounds. Its range in the summer is the lowlands of the park, its food mostly grasses. Moose have remarkably long legs for the size of their bodies, and these long legs are a great help in getting a moose his favorite delicacy—the water plants that grow on the park's lake bottoms. I've often seen a moose happily submerged to the shoulders, plunging his long face under water and coming up with a spongy mouthful of dinner. In the long winters moose eat the tips of willows, up to half an inch in diameter, often travelling over a ridge several thousand feet above timberline to get to a new stand of browse. During deep snows herds of a dozen or more gather in the willow groves.

A bull moose goes to the enormous trouble of growing a huge set of antlers every year—often more than six feet across—only to shed them in November. During most of the year a bull moose is a graceful, friendly animal, but during the rutting season he is often cranky, and at times will charge an automobile.

One late September evening I was driving along the park road when I spotted a huge bull moose in the distance. As I came closer

I saw he had only one antler, the other having been recently broken off. He had several fresh gashes along his shoulders; he appeared bad tempered and on the prod as he lumbered up the road to meet the car, head lowered menacingly, big trumpet ears pricked forward. At the last minute he changed his mind and wandered off into the woods; there seemed to be a disconsolate droop to his shoulders. I drove slowly past the spot, and got a good view of another bull moose, accompanied by a cow. So that was why One-Antler was feeling low. He had apparently come off second best in a fight with the other bull, and had lost his lady friend.

A cow moose is a very dangerous animal in the spring and summer when she has young calves. One time I was running a phone line to the Savage River, and walking through a willow thicket I suddenly heard a sharp snap like the breaking of a branch. I turned my head. Charging me was a cow moose. She was a frightening sight, her hackles raised, looking twice her normal size. Her eyes were flaming red, ugly as the devil. She really meant business. I dashed to the nearest spruce tree and practically ran up it with my climbing irons, just barely getting out of reach before she caught up with me. When I got up there I saw below me twin moose calves, spindle-legged and awkward, only a few hours old. I had walked within fifteen feet of them. Mamma moose kept me up in that tree for fifteen minutes before going away with her babies.

Bull moose are also to be reckoned with in defending the young of the herd, though they are not as vigorous about it as the mothers. For real excitement, they seem to prefer fighting each other. Caribou bulls are of the same mind. In rutting season they will fight each other for a herd, a cow, or just because they're feeling ornery.

One September I was hiking along beside McLeod Creek at the west end of the park when I heard a sharp clanging noise ahead of me. I speeded up—and soon was watching one of the greatest wild-life sights I've ever seen. On a gravel bar down in the creek bottom two big bull caribou were doing battle. They both had enormous antlers. They would back up about twenty feet, and then—like a nightmare sequence out of *When Knighthood Was in Flower*—they would charge head-on at each other, their antlers meeting with a loud clanging crash. Over and over one caribou or the other

would fall to the ground—and his foe would immediately try to give him a murderous gouge of the antlers.

I watched this bloody fight for over ten minutes. The two had gouged each other in the sides and hindquarters, and their wounds were streaming red. Neither showed any sign of wanting to quit. Finally I could stand it no longer. I let out a loud yell and started walking toward them. Only then did they halt the battle and leave the creek bottom. They cut across a tundra flat, then abruptly stopped and began fighting again. They were still fighting when I returned to camp. I never did find out who won, but I know one must have, because I never found the classic evidence of mutual destruction . . . two caribou skeletons with locked antlers.

Cow caribous also sport antlers, though theirs are smaller, often just two forked spikes. The bulls have a huge spread of horn, sometimes going up almost a leg-length above the animal's head, and growing in a semi-circular arc wider than its body. In spite of what some people tell you, you can't judge a caribou's age by his antlers; a small full-grown bull may have an enormous set, and a large, older bull may have small antlers. One side of the rack may have eight points and the other side twenty. The bulls shed their antlers and go back to peaceful co-existence during December and January; the cows shed theirs during calving time in May.

Caribou are the only animals that leave the park in winter. They travel westerly for over a hundred miles to the lush tundra country at the head of the Kuskokwim River. In September you'll see small bands of caribou dotting the landscape, moving slowly westward, gradually merging into one big herd of two to three thousand. In the spring they come traipsing back again, heading up into the high ground of the Alaska Range where the cows can have their calves comparatively free from the mosquitoes and flies that now infest the lowlands.

Dall sheep also know the trick of seizing the high ground to avoid insects. These beautiful, pure white animals (named for the naturalist William H. Dall) are cousins of the Rocky Mountain big horns, but smaller, with slimmer, more symmetrically curved horns. Tourists—and I too, I'll confess—always find it exciting and vastly rewarding to spot a small speck of white on a high ridge, then to bring in with binoculars the graceful creature daintily stepping through the lichens or bounding happily from rock to rock. Almost

always, you'll see the ewes, lambs and yearlings together, from six to twelve or more in a group; the rams likewise stay together. However, if you look sharp, you'll usually see one old ram standing on a vantage point to one side, acting as sentinel for the whole herd. The distance from which one of these creatures can spot even the slightest movement, and set his herd in motion, is unbelievable.

The older and wiser a ram becomes, the more curl he has to his horns; he never sheds them. A ewe has to make do with two straight spikes like goat horns.

Ewes in the park pick the same lambing grounds year after year—sheltered nooks protected by overhanging cliffs, among the foothills flanking the park's north boundary. Lambs are born in May and are able to follow their mothers within hours after birth. They spend the first few weeks of their lives close to the protecting cliffs; you have to be a mountaineer to see them. But by June the lambs are out scampering around on the green slopes, and that is the signal for the herd to begin its summer migration. With utmost caution they cross the intermountain valley with its road, people, and other menaces, and head for the high, insect-free ground of the Alaska Range. In the fall they make the same perilous 25-mile journey. I'll never know what makes a sheep worry about low country; I can only report that I've seen them spend hours, even days on a high point nervously scanning the valley below. Finally it gets too much for them; they plunge down with headlong haste and make for the protective hills across the valley.

In the winter of 1928-29 disaster struck the sheep herd. There had been a deep snow, unusual for McKinley—over six feet. This made it hard, even on windswept ridges, for the sheep to paw down and get their winter fodder of dried alpine plants and redtop hay. On top of this, there came a warm Chinook wind that melted the top of the snow, followed by a severe freeze that sealed their grazing ground in a sheath of ice. The frantic sheep tried to paw their way through the ice, and cut their legs to the bone, often injuring themselves so they couldn't walk. Hundreds of the poor, gentle creatures died of starvation that winter. Probably only those luckily near unfrozen "spring creeks" survived to save the herd from complete extermination.

Nature never permits herself to be sentimental. This stark

tragedy for the Dall sheep was what could only be called a boom year for the wolves, foxes and wolverines.

Wolverines, by the way, are no relation to wolves. They are weasels, the largest members of that swift-running family, weighing about 25 to 35 pounds, two to four feet long, a little bigger than a fox. They are rated as the most destructive animals for their size in the whole area, their flashingly efficient hunting technique giving them a somewhat unwarranted reputation as wanton killers. Wolverines are no varmints to play games with.

On the other hand, some foxes I've known are as playful as puppies and as mischievous. A red fox hung around my patrol cabin all one winter and became, if not tame, at least quite indifferent to people, cabins and sled dogs. One winter dawn I was hitching up my dogs; the sled was snubbed securely, or so I thought, to a tree. I had just put the collar on my last dog when Mr. Fox trotted up.

The dogs set up an instant clamor and lunged on their harness. The snub rope held. I shouted and threw snowballs at the fox, trying to scare him away, but he would only trot a few feet, then glance back, enjoying all the excitement he had stirred up. At this point the dogs gave an extra-hard pull. The rope broke, and away went dogs, sled and fox. I managed to catch hold of the sled and hang on as the fox started across a river bottom with the dog team in loud pursuit. The fox, of course, easily outdistanced the team, and after running about a quarter of a mile all the dogs got into a tangle and started a snapping, snarling argument about who tripped up whom. As I waded in to untangle the mess, my ear caught a fox's bark in the distance—a derisive sound if ever I've heard one.

Foxes in the park seem to know they have the Indian sign on sled dogs. Late one snow-bright night another fox with a devilish personality began barking at my securely chained dogs. In an instant the clamor was deafening—dogs in a frenzy, fox in an ecstasy—a barking, yapping, chain-rattling uproar that kept me awake for an hour. Finally I got up and threw the fox a chunk of dog feed. He picked up the frozen fish and trotted contentedly off, his black-mail successful.

But I hadn't seen the last of that red-furred racketeer. Four days later, just as I had returned from a patrol and was feeding

the dogs, my enemy returned. The dogs were busy eating and didn't pay too much attention; but as I was walking away I saw that fox trotting off with my hunting knife. I had used it to cut tallow for the dogs, and I guess it smelled like a delicacy. I shouted and threw a chunk of tallow at him, but he disappeared in the trees with the knife in his teeth. I hope he cut his throat, the thief.

Foxes don't have as easy a time with their wild neighbors as they do with people. A fox will dig a den in a fine, sunny, sheltered spot, only to have wolves come along and kick him out, then enlarge the den for their own use. And if a fox misses out on a hunting project, no animal witness bothers to be polite about it. Adolph Murie tells about one fox that made a fifteen yard sprint, pounced at a ground squirrel, and missed. He rolled over and over, then picked himself up and went on his way trying to pretend nothing had happened. All the squirrels in the neighborhood immediately sat up on their hind legs and gave him a loud, chattering razzberry. The magpies got into the act and dive-bombed him. The fox took to his heels.

There are four color varieties of foxes in the park. Rarest of all is the sleek, beautiful black fox. Red foxes and "cross foxes"—a cross between red and silver—are the most common; silvers are much scarcer. There is no evidence that color forms any separation line or creates any aristocracy. A female wearing a silver fox coat cannot swank it over a lady in red.

Birds, of course, take all the costume prizes—particularly the ptarmigan, with their fashionable change of dress from summer to winter. Ptarmigan are relatives of grouse, and there are three kinds of these fascinating birds in the park—willow, rock, and white-tailed ptarmigan. Willow ptarmigan are the largest, most plentiful, and easiest to see, because they live at lower elevations. In the summer they are maroon-brown, darker at the throat and breast, with white wings, black tail and an orange-red marking above the eyes. In winter they turn white, all but the black tail. The transition is not made all at once; it is as slow and deliberate as a strip tease. First a speck of white, then another; finally, as the nights get frostier, only a spot of brown is left—that and the bright red marking above the eyes that makes the bird look as if it had been in a scrap.

Each variety of ptarmigan has a distinct dialect of its own;

willow ptarmigan chuckle softly, and cry "Come 'ere, Come 'ere, Come 'ere"; rock ptarmigan have a call like the croak of a bullfrog, and the little white-tailed ptarmigan have a high-pitched scream entirely out of keeping with their gentle personality. I'm sure that between them they have as much trouble understanding one another as a Peiping Chinese talking to a Cantonese.

They seem to manage, though. During the late fall these birds gather in large flocks, ranging from fifty to several hundred. In April and May they pair up and raise their young until they are full grown.

Ptarmigan mothers, and fathers, too, will do the darnedest things to try to lure you away from their chicks. I learned this to my embarrassment when I was acting as park escort to Dr. Gilbert Grosvenor, head of the National Geographic Society. We came upon a covey of ptarmigan in the road—a cock, hen and a dozen chicks. The cock immediately pretended to have a broken wing. Dr. Grosvenor cautiously unlimbered his camera. Full of assurance as an experienced naturalist, I remarked, "You can get quite close. The male won't leave." Dr. Grosvenor did and the cock flew up right in his face.

I could think of only one thing to say, and I said it. "You have had a unique experience. This is the first time a ptarmigan has ever been known to attack a man." This new honor did not seem to impress the doctor.

Besides ptarmigan, there are at least a dozen other feathered citizens that could qualify for the bird version of sourdough: among these winter residents are the little red polls, chickadees, magpies, Canada jays, ruffed grouse, hairy woodpeckers, grosbeaks, ravens, three kinds of owls and the great golden eagle. Jays are the greatest busybodies, and magpies the most quarrelsome. I've seen magpies fight each other fiercely for a tiny piece of meat; also one time at headquarters I saw a pair of magpies gang up on a good-sized weasel.

The weasel had a squirrel in his mouth, on which he intended to dine. The objective of the magpies was to get him to drop the meat. They tried squawking dives on him, to no effect; they tried the old game of one fluttering painfully in front, while the other lurked behind; they tried dive-bombing in concert. Finally the weasel dropped the meat but he sat on it as he did, and pawed and

snapped at his enemies. When the magpies retired to a branch to take counsel, the weasel quickly darted over to a park warehouse and dragged his meat under it. He then stuck his head out and chattered triumphantly at the thwarted magpies.

Canada jays are called camp robbers, and it's well known that they will steal anything they can carry, whether or not it is good to eat. They'll take buttons, corks, even fishing spinners. These birds are very astute, moreover, in the way they protect their own nests from robbery. They lay their eggs and hatch their young in February and March, when it's forty below and few people or animals are out, particularly hunting for birds' eggs. The jays build their nests in trees, and early spring storms destroy them as soon as the occupants leave.

In June, the tundra is as crowded with nests as a city tenement—almost all of migrating birds. Some nesting birds have only a few square yards of tundra they can call their own, but they are all chirping, trilling or warbling happily, they all have enough to eat, and nobody seems to feel crowded. Most of these summer bird people do not bother to hide their nests, but one does such a good job of it only a single nest has ever been found . . . the surf-bird, a devotee of tourism who comes from winter coastal regions as far away as the Straits of Magellan. Actually, it's a cosmopolitan crowd there on the Alaska tundra—the long-tailed jaeger flies in across the Pacific from Japan; the golden plover touches down from Hawaii, and the European wheatear arrives via Asia. Ducks come up the flyways from the Gulf of California and the Caribbean . . . Old Squaw ducks, dark above and white below, are common on the little blue lakes; so are Bald Pates with their white caps and white wing hatches.

But of all the birds that come to McKinley to spend the summer, the most surprising to tourists are the ones that probably come the shortest distance: seagulls. They are a hundred miles from their tidewater haunts, but they find fine fishing in McKinley's lakes and streams, and fine nesting in the sand bars. They usually lay two eggs the size of hens' eggs in a hollow they dig in the sand; these eggs are spaced two inches apart so the mother's breastbone will fit neatly between them. Once Ranger Ted Ogsten and I came upon two such eggs, left in the warm spring sun while mamma did a bit of

fishing. Ted said, "Let's play a trick on that girl," and took one egg away. We then took cover to observe. Mrs. Gull returned with a fish in her beak, took in the situation, and with complete aplomb rolled a rock alongside her one egg, sat on rock and egg and began to eat her fish dinner. We had considerable difficulty chasing her away so we could put back her egg.

I believe I can claim to have discovered one of the four species of native game-fish that are now well-known to McKinley anglers. In the summer of 1928 I was on a patrol with Harry Karstens and Fritz Nyberg; I was detailed to take a pack horse back to the Big Timber cabin for a fresh supply of grub. About a mile from the cabin I was crossing a small creek and watching a beaver in a nearby pond swimming along with a large, toothsome green branch in his teeth, to store under his house for winter food; I remember thinking it looked like an aquatic version of Birnam Wood going to Dunsinane, then I glanced down to make sure of my footing—and saw I was about to step on a strange new fish almost eighteen inches long, with a bright red belly. I was sure it wasn't a grayling. I duly reported the matter to Harry and Fritz, and next morning we started back for the spot, fish poles in hand. We split up to fish the eighteen or so little lakes and streams in the area. I caught nothing but grayling; then I saw Harry motioning to me. He pointed out a school of fish moving slowly around over the sandy bottom. They had disdained all his lures. I tried my flies and spinners and got similarly rebuffed. I decided to try one last cast with a simple Gray Hackle. I ticked the lure into the water, there was a flash of red, then the strike. It took me five minutes to land that fish, but what a beauty! It was 25 inches long and weighed about five pounds. It had no scales, was greenish brown on the back, shading into deep red on its underparts, with bright crimson spots and amber pectoral and ventral fins. "It's some kind of trout," Harry said. When we sent specimens to the states they were classified as Arctic char. (Dolly Varden trout is thought to be sub-species of char.) The meat is bright pink and excellent eating.

Most of the rivers in the Denali region are glacier-fed, and too filled with silt for fish; but in the spring-fed streams, and lakes, there are five fine varieties of game fish you can take with flies or spinners, and one with bait: Arctic grayling, mackinaw trout,

lake trout, Dolly Varden and Arctic char; ling cod will take bait—meat only. But for sport and fine fishing, give me grayling every time.

Grayling are very powerful for their size and put up a determined fight. In some lakes they grow to 23 inches in length and weigh up to four pounds. The best fly to take them, I've found, is the Black Gnat. They are beautiful fish, with enormous sail-like dorsal fins, blue-spotted and edged with red; a brown head, bluish-bronze upper body, purple-gray sides, scattered blue-black spots along the front of the body, medium-size scales. Grayling in the small creeks leave for the deep rivers before the fall freeze-up, and return in the spring as soon as the ice has melted.

As I said, grayling taste mighty fine no matter how you cook them except as prepared once by a friend of mine, name of Phil Newill. He rolled one batch of beauties in powdered sugar, thinking it was flour, then fried them. Stubborn cuss ate 'em, too. So did I. They tasted terrible.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that one out of every five Americans 12 years old or over is a hunter, a fisherman, or both. Every human population explosion thus brings with it a corresponding menace to the population of wild creatures . . . making conservation and wildlife management increasingly needful.

Outside national parks and other game refuges, wildlife management is a way of farming the wild game, by regulating hunting seasons, closing seasons when game gets low, extending seasons when game is overbreeding with consequent danger of starvation.

In a national park, game management consists of protecting animals against people, and leaving everything else alone. The less management, the better it's managed, except in case of emergencies. Grizzlies that insist on raiding people's garbage cans constitute one form of emergency; we handle it by live-trapping the critters in an iron culvert pipe mounted on wheels, then whisking Mr. Grizzly sixty or seventy miles into the wilderness away from temptation.

The other emergency comes up when the predators get out of hand. One time our Dall sheep had had a couple of exceptionally rough winters, and were falling easy prey to the wolves. The sheep population was going down as the wolves increased. We finally prevailed on the Park Service to suspend the hard-and-fast rule

that nature is its own best regulator. A few rangers with traps and rifles took care of the excess wolves.

People are still the biggest emergency for wild animals, particularly those sneaky humans who like to do things the easy, cheating way—the poachers. These men, I've noticed, are of two kinds: those who are thoughtless, irresponsible, and have never really grown up; they'll whip up their rifles and poach a fine bull caribou on the spur of the moment. The other kind are definitely evil; they're out to do things the underhand way, and if they're stopped in one place they'll move on across the tundra to try it someplace else.

Some just need a little reminder that there is a ranger around. Such a one was the fellow I met on Clearwater Creek, eight miles southwest of Big Timber where I'd just built the ranger cabin. At timberline on Clearwater Creek I saw some log caches and a cabin; as I came close I was greeted by a chorus of dogs, and saw a tall, slim man cutting wood. When I had introduced myself this man told me his name was Carlson, that he had some mining claims staked on Carlson Creek (which he had named after himself), that others were prospecting in the area but most of them were getting discouraged and leaving the country. "If it wasn't for my trapping," he added, "I couldn't afford to prospect."

Carlson insisted he didn't trap in the park, only beyond the north boundary, about ten miles from his cabin. When I told him I would be stationed permanently at Big Timber and would be seeing him often, I detected a sudden coolness in his manner.

I also noticed a quarter of caribou hanging in one of his caches. He had nine big sled dogs. At that time, a prospector in the park was allowed to take game meat for his own use, but forbidden to feed it to his dogs.

I said nothing about the unpleasant possibilities in the quarter caribou-dog situation; but when I finished my patrol and came back past Carlson's cabin a week later, he informed me he was going to pack his dogs and head for Lake Minchumina, sixty miles north of the park. There he was going to build a cabin and trap. "There is no worthwhile prospecting around here," he said. "From now on I'm going to spend my time trapping." I have no doubt that this was true; I also have no doubt that he knew if he didn't move I would keep an eye on him all winter to see he didn't trap in the park.

A friendlier type of rapsallions were the pair I encountered some weeks later while hiking back to headquarters. I was snowshoeing up over Highway Pass, a favorite haunt of mountain sheep, when I met two men, both carrying rifles. One of them said his name was Slim Johnson, that he and his brother were taking annual leave from the Alaska Railroad and hiking in to see the Quigleys. Brother Johnson, less talkative, held up his rifle and said they had been given permission by Karstens to take the guns through the park so they could help the Quigleys get their winter meat. Their story held water, so I remarked, as a josh, "How many mountain sheep have you killed?"

I thought Slim Johnson looked funny when I said that—but I could tell from their packs that they didn't have even half a sheep between them.

At the Toklat relief tent, I noticed a few sheep hairs on the floor. I tried to follow the Johnsons' tracks out from the tent, but the snow had drifted. Then I saw some ravens circling at the foot of a mountain across the river. I went over.

The story was written in the snow—the remains of a mountain sheep with men's tracks all around it. By the look of things, the sheep had been cleaned and skinned out. Even the feet were there.

There was no doubt those rascals had killed a sheep. Next thing was to find the meat, so I could catch the killers when they came to get it. I figured they had cached it somewhere near. I searched the whole area thoroughly.

Not a thing showed up. They had outsmarted me somehow. Ten years later, riding on the Alaska Railroad, I finally got Slim, now a much more mature individual, to tell me where he had hidden that sheep. Slim grinned and said, "I hid it in the safest place there was—right in your own ranger cache, under three bales of dog salmon."

There was one man of the poaching fraternity in whom I could sense the evil the moment I set eyes on him. He went by the name of Grubstake Bill, and his hangout was the McKinley River country. This was the same fellow who had tried to flim-flam Joe Quigley with a fake gold nugget. He had tried many propositions, including an attempt to fox the government by staking out a trading post on the McKinley River and then applying for title, pre-dated to a time before the area had been set aside as a park.

Bill was a first-class woodsman but lazy as the devil; he made a slave out of his wife until she finally left him. Many a time I've come upon Bill and his wife on a winter trail; Bill would be riding on the sled, his wife snowshoeing behind with a pack on her back.

Bill had a winter trap line outside the park, but very near the boundary. We were sure he also trapped inside, but were never able to catch him. However, one time we must have been getting close.

Bill showed up at the Kantishna ranger station and made me a proposition: if I would let him trap in the park he would split 50-50 with me on the fur he caught. I smiled and pointed to the cabin door. The following day he returned with a .22 rifle and said, "I'd like to fire a few shots to try this thing out. I think the sights are out of line."

We did not allow firearms to be discharged in the park without permission.

I told him to go ahead and sight in the rifle. He drove a dry stick about two inches in diameter into the ground and blazed a spot in it with his hunting knife. Then he paced off a hundred feet and shot three times in rapid succession. When we examined the stick, all three shots had hit the same place and all three made one jagged hole. This was expert shooting, obviously done to impress me. I didn't say anything, but went back to the cabin and got my 30-06 high powered rifle. I fired from the same place Bill had, using a soft-nosed bullet. Fortunately I also hit the stick; it flew to pieces from the impact of the soft-nosed bullet. Then I remarked, "Why waste three shots when one is more effective?" Bill departed without commenting.

One year beaver pelts had boomed to high prices on the fur market. Bill took the trouble to tell me that after I left for headquarters he would trap some beaver in the park. They were wonderfully plentiful in the area around Big Timber. I told him, "You will like hell! I'll stay in here as long as you do, and I'll keep a good watch out for you!"

The season wore on and spring came. The snow melted and travel became more and more difficult. Every day or so Bill would call at the cabin to see if I had departed. I stayed until beaver season closed and beaver pelts were past their prime. Then Bill finally moved to a prospecting claim he had on Slippery Creek, well out

of the park. My trip back to headquarters was one of the toughest I've ever made. I had to pull the sled over bare ground for most of the distance. But at least the beaver were still there for visitors to see and enjoy.

How did Bill wind up? His skeleton was found one spring near his Slippery Creek cabin—picked clean by animals and birds.

Wild animals are not supposed to be as heavily endowed with principles as men are; but I never heard of a wild animal yet that tried to do a really mean, low-down thing. I guess it's because they've got no room in their skulls for easy rationalizing.



Dog Power

ON PRINCIPLE, I HAD A PROMOTION COMING to me, in the autumn of 1931. Fritz Nyberg had gotten himself into an argument with Superintendent Liek, which wound up with Fritz resigning. I was sorry. Fritz was my friend. But this put me in direct line for the job of Chief Ranger.

I was unaware of the importance of a visit to the park that August by Horace Albright, Director of the National Park Service. While there, Albright got an attack of appendicitis, and on his return from the hospital Harry Liek had him driven around the park in an automobile from the McKinley Park Tourist and Transportation Company. Along on many of these jaunts was Lou Corbley, who had been working for the park company five years. Lou was a slender, gray-haired ex-cowpuncher from Montana, bow-legged and smiling, with a low, pleasant drawl. He was a man you liked on sight. He would, today, make a perfect manager for a dude ranch.

In September Lou Corbley was appointed Chief Ranger.

Lou was six years over the age limit; and he had never before been in the park service.

I came close to snapping off the point of my pen as I wrote out my resignation—this one as brief and curt as I could make it. I carried it around in my pocket while I went on a last patrol out of the Kantishna Ranger Station. All the landmarks of the area had become a part of me . . . I had travelled the same tundra trails with the same families of caribou; the coveys of ptarmigan that trotted along ahead of me seemed just like other neighbors. I looked up at the glacier heights of McGonagall Pass on the shoulder of Denali, and realized I knew every foot of the way up to the

pass and back. I had whipsawed lumber and hauled logs for ranger cabins; cut trails for pack horses and patrolled the park boundaries during the hunting season. I had a feeling of pride as I watched the park become safer and more comfortable for tourists and rangers alike. All this was why, after a week, I fished my resignation out of my pocket and tore it up.

One of the things I loved best about this satisfying, rugged life was a circumstance that in the beginning had bothered me most: the necessity for intimate, friendly association with big, sharp-toothed Alaskan huskies and malemutes. I believe that no one who lives on terms of mutual dependence with these shaggy, capable creatures can fail to like and admire them . . . even in the midst of exasperation at some of their ornery animal antics.

When people ask me how a man can train those dogs to pull a heavy sled through the snow, I usually reply, "It begins with their training you."

It did with me, anyhow. When I came back from building the cabin at Big Timber, my first autumn out in the park Harry Karstens said, "Grant, I've assigned you seven dogs. They'll need conditioning and training before you take them back out to the Kantishna."

"Uh, thanks." I was quite aware, from my trip out to Ewe Creek the previous winter, of how little I knew about dogs hitched to sleds.

"Soon as you get your team in condition, you can load up and take off. There's enough snow right now, but you'll likely need a week to get the dogs back into work habits."

I said, "Sure," and immediately hunted up Fritz Nyberg for a translation of Harry's orders. "First thing you do," said Fritz, "is go over your dog harness and get it fitted to your dogs." I adjusted buckles and traces under Fritz's direction, the dogs showing much more patience than I ever did, getting fitted for anything. Then I overhauled my sled; next morning I hitched my team of huskies to it, and hopefully yelled "Mush!"

The team took off with a leap and a couple of barks of good will. They were an odd-looking outfit; no two of them were the same color. The leader, out in front by himself, was a big, rangy light red dog named Dynamite. One of the swing dogs, Nig, was black, and the other one, Stony, was white with brown spots. Of the next

two dogs, John was black with white markings, and Toklat white with black markings. One of my wheel dogs (in the rear next to the sled runner), a big straight-eared half-wolf called Jake, was black on top, gray-white below, his mate, Olie, was dark red.

I'd better explain that Alaska is a melting pot for dogs, from Eskimo to Newfoundland; but there are two main classifications: malemutes, which are close to pure Eskimo, with some intermingling of imported breeds; and huskies, the name given to all assorted sled dogs with recognizable wolf characteristics. My team were huskies.

Only Dynamite, Jake and Nig had been worked before; the other four were ten-month-old pups. They gave me my first lesson in "conditioning and training" a quarter mile out on the trail.

The pups got themselves into a hopeless tangle. Dynamite looked at me as much as to say, "What could you expect?" I waded in, got the team untangled, and we started off again only to get into another snarl of dogs and harness. This time Jake and Nig began to fight.

I had been told that fighting is a husky characteristic, and excusable, but I was very glad Fritz had also told me about whacking the critters over the head with the handle of my dog whip when they took to flashing fangs at each other. I did so, whereupon my two pooches ceased their argument and got back to their hauling job in a completely matter-of-fact way—apparently assuming I knew their debate was partly a means of letting off steam after five months of enforced idleness.

Two miles farther on I was glad to notice that my animals' lack of exercise had now translated itself into lack of stamina. Their tongues were out and their feet were dragging. I turned them around and we made the trip back calmly and slowly. No tangles.

For six days my vari-colored team and I hit the trail, the sled carrying increasingly heavy loads. My plan was to work the kinks out of their muscles as I worked the tendency to tangle out of their minds. I climaxed the job with a fifteen mile trip, which the team made with plume-tailed alacrity, even though we did get into one small tangle on some ice. I didn't realize then that my dogs were pointing out to me the fact that, in dog-sled travel as in other forms of locomotion, ice is a red-flag hazard.

I found it out in spades a few weeks later. The demonstration was staged by three teams for the benefit of another new ranger, myself, and Fritz Nyberg, who didn't need it.

There were twenty-one dogs involved. All three sleds were heavily loaded with supplies we were relaying over a 20-mile stretch between Igloo Creek and the Toklat River shelter tent, on the winter trail out to Big Timber. The new man turned out to be Lee Swisher, my cabin-mate of Fairbanks days. Darkness had caught up with us just over the pass, and going down the other side we couldn't see twenty feet ahead. Fritz was in the lead, driving hard to reach camp. Suddenly he disappeared over the river bank. I heard a warning shout, but it came too late. My dogs galloped down the embankment and out into sheer glare ice. The Toklat had frozen to the bottom, overflowed and frozen again in one shining, sloping sheet. My sled swayed and slithered from side to side; the dogs and I floundered and staggered, but the slight pitch of the river bed was too much. We couldn't stop. I was too busy to think about warning Lee; in another minute I caught a glimpse of his sled and dogs following me in a wild scramble down the ice.

My dogs slid smack into a bend and into Fritz's team. Lee's dogs slammed into the other fourteen. Immediately all three teams got into a glorious fighting tangle. Every time one or all of us humans tried to unravel it . . . floppo, down we'd go on the ice. We must have looked like drunks. It took half an hour's work under the starshine to get our teams hauled apart and our sleds upright. When we finally did, our dogs looked vastly unconcerned about the whole hassle. At this point we did what we should have done before barging out onto that pesky river. We wrapped chains around our sled runners to rough-lock them.

Sled dogs may not care how they get where they're going, ice-skating or otherwise, but they have a most remarkable intelligence in knowing where to go. Dynamite gave me a shining example of this on my third relay between Igloo and Toklat. I was travelling alone, and just as I got my sled loaded the wind came up, carrying stinging snow with it. At the top of Polychrome Pass I found myself in the worst blizzard I'd ever experienced; I couldn't see fifty feet ahead. Down the pass, we got a little wind protection from the high hills on either side, but out in the open on the Toklat flats the snow came at us horizontally. Visibility was zero. I hadn't the least



Mt McKinley rises up 20,320 feet sheer from the valley floor, without benefit of foothills. Middle right, Wonder Lake; left, Big Timber. This was the scene that burst on my eyes on my first trip out through the park. (See page 46)

Charles Ott photo

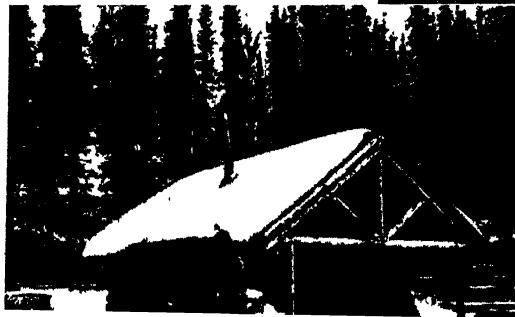


Grant Pearson photo

On the trail, winter patrol through the park. The snow-covered tundra makes a broad highway for sled dogs, and there's nothing more exhilarating than following the bobbing plumes of their tails as they trot along through the crisp, crackling snow (See page 108)

Cache at the Toklat River Ranger Station and a typical Alaska storage building for food, furs, and other supplies that might tempt a wild animal. Note tin cans around posts to prevent squirrels from getting up (See page 64)

Charles Ott photo



Ranger patrol cabin on the lower Toklat River. This ranger outpost is typical of the cabins built through the park, note the wide overhang of the porch, and the cabin's "double roof," to keep warmth in (See page 47)

Grant Pearson photo



Fannie Quigley at the age of 73, with her favorite shooting iron and that speculative squint in her eye that means she'd like to see a moose through the gun's sights Fannie was a skilled hunter and, like all pioneers, her skills were wide and varied. (See page 53)

Don Knutsen photo

Little Johnnie Busia, with a couple of prime pelts-wolf and wolverine Little Johnnie operated his trap lines like a well-managed farm. He made sure never to over-trap. A game warden once said, 'If all trappers used Johnnie's methods, my job would be easy' (See page 49)



J. Malcolm Greany photo

Site of the once-blooming town of Eureka in the Kantishna district. It once held 5,000 people, now it can hardly even qualify as a ghost town, because most of the buildings have been torn down. Little Johnnie's place is at the left, across Moose Creek. (See page 49)



J Malcolm Greany photo



This is Little Johnnie's "cable car" over Moose Creek to his house, with me in the operator-passenger seat. The Cable route connected Johnnie's place with the rest of the ghost town of Eureka. (See page 50)

Jake, the half-wolf, who had a fang-flashing feud with another dog, Nig, until I settled it by hitching the two of them along side each other. They then calmed down and became willing workers. (See page 119)



A typical leader of an Alaskan dog team—alert, friendly, eager to do his job and wise in the ways of winter trails. This is Little Jim, Johnnie Busa's favorite lead dog, a vastly intelligent animal on whom Johnnie depended greatly. (See page 115)



J Malcolm Greany photo

Grant Pearson photo

Charles Ott photo

A ptarmigan changing from summer to winter dress. They manage to do it neatly and charmingly, without giving the appearance of moulting, as becomes a fashion-conscious fowl. Ptarmigan are year-round residents of the park. (See page 98)



J. Malcolm Greany photo

Charles Ott photo



A caribou cow with antlers in the velvet. Caribou in the park are not exactly tame, but they are certainly indifferent to man and his machines, and will amble slowly ahead of cars with less nervousness than a pedestrian. (See page 95)

Toklat grizzlies take turns digging a ground squirrel out of his hole. It's my opinion that grizzlies work harder at this than any of their other activities, except perhaps wrecking a ranger's cabin in a similar search for food. (See page 87)





Bradford Washburn photo

This is the ascent route we took in 1932. The distance looks short, but it took us five weeks to get from our base camp below McGonagall Pass to the summit, and what with relaying packloads of supplies, I figured I climbed most of McKinley three times (See chapters 12, 13, 14)

A dangerous avalanche slope alongside Muldrow Glacier at 10,000 feet elevation. As you can see, some of that snow has let go already, and a loud word would start thousands of tons more thundering down. It pays not to walk close to such slopes. (See page 140)



Grant Pearson photo



Bradford Washburn photo

A great crevasse in the lower Muldrow ice fall. Those depths are deep blue merging into inky black—as I found out to my horror when I fell into such a trap myself. (See page 160) The climber above is poking the snow bridge with his ice axe, to test its safety.



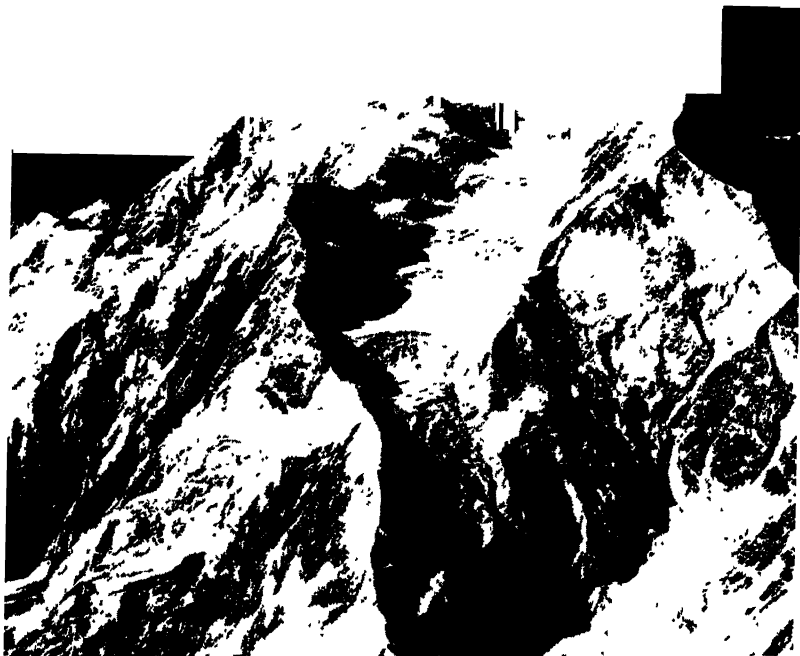
Aerial view of the C-47 crash scene, and the toughest part of the route I picked out to reach it. The air photo doesn't show the steepness of that slope, but you can be sure we wouldn't have bothered to rig a rope if it hadn't been nearly perpendicular (See page 190)

J. Malcolm Greany photo

Grant Pearson photo



Tragedy at 10,000 feet On this sled is the body of cosmic ray scientist Theodore Koven, whom we found frozen to death on Muldrow Glacier. From left, Harry Liek, Al Lindley, Erling Strom. (See page 159)



McKinley's upper ramparts from the air Lower center, Harper Icefall, which delivers hundreds of tons of ice a day, at the left, the knife edge of Karstens Ridge, upper center, Harper Glacier, leading to the summit (left), and North Peak (right) (See chapters 13 and 14)

Bradford Washburn photo

Grant Pearson photo

Camp three, at the head of Muldrow Glacier, 11,000 feet Harper Icefall and Karstens' Ridge in the background, the top of Denali hidden in a swirl of clouds. (See page 143)





Fancy way to bring in beans Army Air Corps plane coming in to drop supplies to the Air Corps expedition plodding along on the glacier below, on their way to the site of the crashed C-47 on an Alaska Range peak. (See page 194)



J Malcolm Greany photo

The Snow Cat, first mechanized equipment ever used in the Alaska Range This cat is towing a squad of bundled soldiers along Muldrow Glacier at 7,000 feet At full speed, these cats could hurdle a small crevasse (See page 194)

J Malcolm Greany photo





J. Malcolm Greany photo

A breather at 9,500 feet on the 1944 expedition to bring out the bodies of fliers killed in the mountainside crash of a C-47 transport. Left to right, Sgt. Jim Gale, Giant Pearson (sitting down, of course, I never passed up such an opportunity), Bradford Washburn (See page 195)

Unexplored territory in the heart of the Alaska Range. In squads of four and five, the C-47 Crash Expedition moves up to the head of an unknown glacier, following the glacier rim up to the divide (See page 196)

J. Malcolm Greany photo





As Shirley grew up in the wilderness of McKinley Park, she came to love the flowers, the dogs, and the wild animals. Here she is in a patch of flaming fireweed along the Teklanika River. (See page 189) Grant Pearson photo



Philip Newell photo

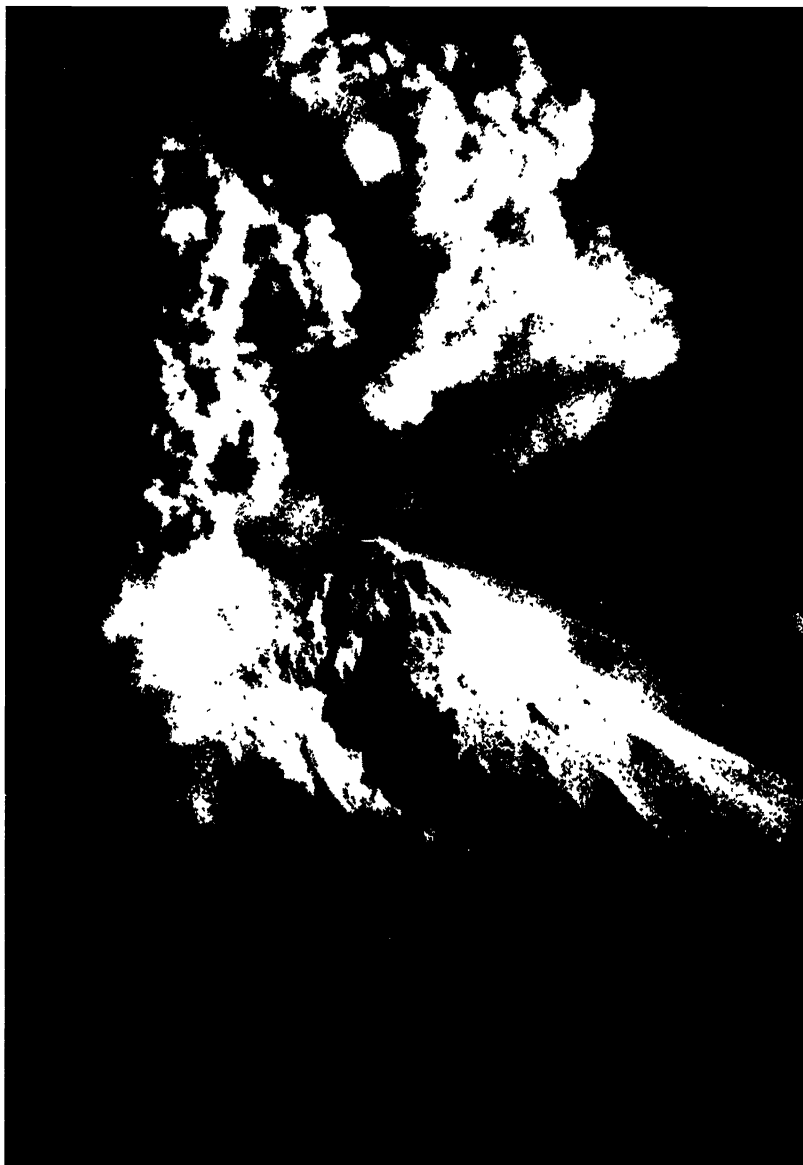
Crossing of the Toklat River on the McKinley road. The Toklat has an irritating habit of changing its course, constantly washing out the wooden bridge shown here. When I became park superintendent I pushed a road program that has resulted in a new concrete bridge over the Toklat, thus putting an end to its bridge-busting antics. (See page 45)



When we came down out of the cold, wintry blasts we found it was summer in the park, and saw the beautiful warm greens of the tundra reflected in Wonder Lake along with the icy heights of Denali (See page 201) Grant Pearson photo

1947 McKinley climb—"Operation White Tower"—showing, at lower right, one of the ice igloos we built, and were very glad to have when blizzards blew our tent down. The climber in the picture is Barbara Washburn, first woman to climb McKinley (See page 207)





Mt. Trident in the Katmai National Monument, spitting up volcanic smoke and ashes as I flew over it in February, 1953. This outburst was nothing like the one that created the Valley of 10,000 Smokes in 1912, but it was no slouch of an eruption, and spread ashes for a hundred miles. (See page 203)

National Park Service photo

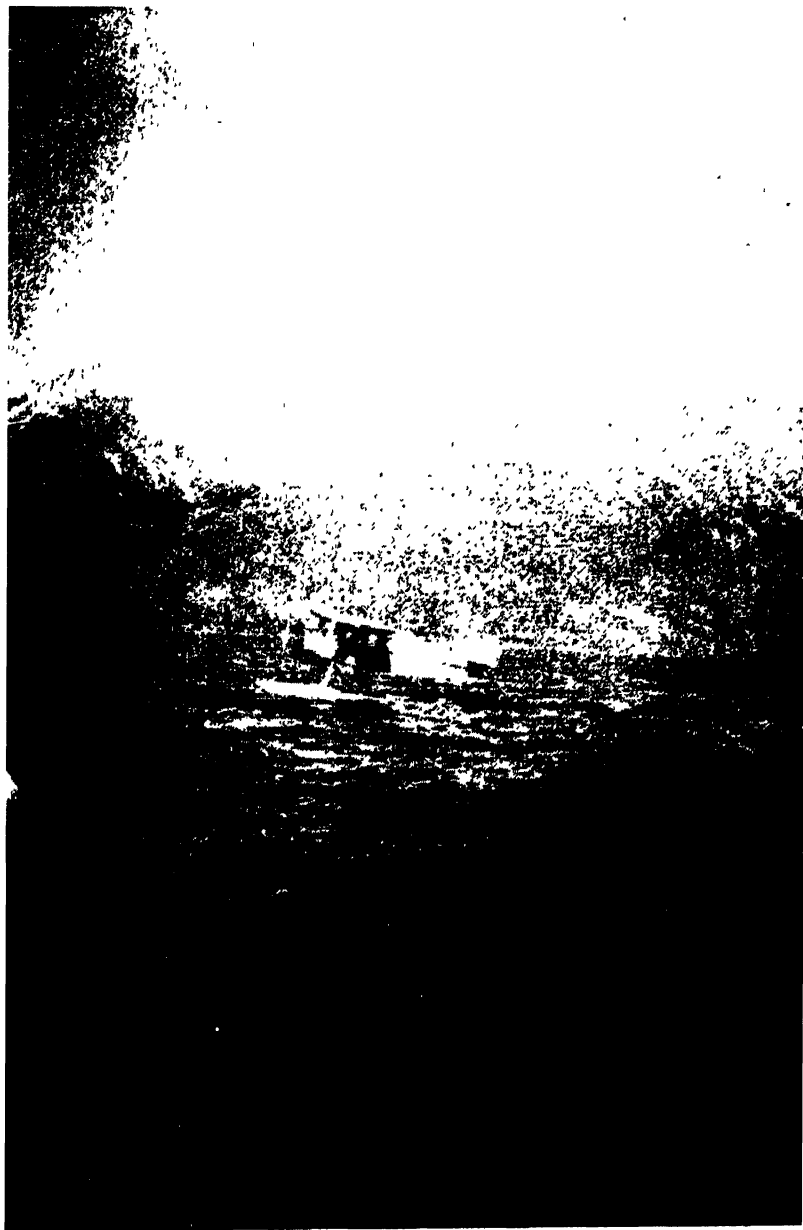


The cabin on the tundra I built with Shirley's help, in the picture above, I'm holding up the door-jamb. The cabin is only a stone's throw from Moose Creek, where a grayling dinner awaits me for the casting. In the background, the crest of McKinley. (See page 214)

The crevasse is easily spotted—but will the ice bridge hold? Alaska Range climbers pause to survey a ticklish situation. Note Yukon sled in foreground. (See pages 89, 142)

Army Air Force photo





Bush pilot landing on an Alaska lake This is still the way I have to travel to get around my huge 18th Assembly District.

Philip Newill photo

idea where to go, and began to think of holing up . . . but Dynamite kept right on, plumed tail waving confidently. In places the snow had blown off the ice; there the wind made the sled into an iceboat, taking dogs and me with it slipping and sliding until we hit another snowy patch. Then Dynamite would prick up his ears and on we'd go. When we finally got to the Toklat shelter tent those dogs had so much snow blown into their fur they looked like a team of matched white Siberians. They also, it seemed to me, looked right proud of themselves, especially Dynamite.

A wise sled dog can give even a veteran dog-musher lessons in taking care of himself in the wild. The following spring I considered myself pretty much the real thing in sourdoughs. After all, I'd spent two winters in the park. It was at this point that Dynamite gave me a much-needed bit of education on where to locate a camp. We were going back to headquarters from the Kantishna; it was thirty below, and I had just pitched tent on the wide flats of the Teklanika.

During spring freshets this river is constantly changing course. My dogs and I had just got comfortably settled when one fellow set up a furious barking. I stuck my head outside the tent flap. It was Dynamite. He appeared to be barking down at the snow.

"Shut up, you!" I yelled. He lowered his head and quieted down, but as soon as I got back into my sleeping bag he began his clamor again. I went outside with considerable reluctance to deal with the racket. My tent was sheltered in a little depression, and my noisy leader was tied near the others, about thirty feet away on slightly higher ground. As I started across the crusted snow, I suddenly sank to my knees in freezing water. It was oozing silently along under the hard surface. My tent and supplies were squarely in its path.

I hitched up and scrambled out of there, barely in time to escape a dangerous soaking and freezing.

This is what had happened: the Teklanika, behaving like so many Alaska streams, had frozen solid at one place, forming an ice dam, whereupon the unfrozen water went around what it could not get under or over. My unappreciated leader had called my attention to this law of hydraulics. Next day I apologized to him with an extra ration of fish.

Another time it was Fritz's big red lead dog, Bos'n, who gave us a warning that undoubtedly saved our lives. We were at the Big

Timber cabin, getting ready to travel the ninety-mile trail back to headquarters. Fritz was studying the map while I hitched our two teams together, Bos'n in the lead, the two sleds rigged tandem. Fritz came out the door, holding up the map and saying, "Look, Grant. If we go up over Anderson Pass it's only forty miles from right here to the railroad. And from then on, all down grade on the roadbed back to headquarters."

I looked at the map and said, "Swell. Last fifty miles between the rails. And no train on the winter schedule till day after tomorrow."

Anderson Pass is a little-known cleft in the Alaska Range, cutting through at 6,000 feet from the head of a branch of Muldrow Glacier. We had never been over it, but Fritz had heard it was passable for dogs. Our route lay due southeast over the pass and down to the railroad. We were mushing along in fine style on Muldrow Glacier, the bodies of the dogs covered with light frost, their bushy tails swaying in rhythm to the run, when we sighted an opening in the mountain wall on our left. There was supposed to be only one such opening.

We said "This is it!" and started up. Within half a mile a low-hanging cloud settled even lower, and we found ourselves slogging along in dense fog. The way the dogs were pulling we could tell the grade was much steeper than it looked.

A slight lift in the cloud showed us that our branch glacier forked again, and the fork straight ahead was too steep for any dog team living. So, muttering uncomplimentary opinions about people who never tell you all the turns in the road, we swung our team onto the other fork. It ended, a quarter mile farther, at what appeared to be a saddle between the mountains. This, we decided, was the pass. The fog had blanketed down over us again.

Here, our lead dog flatly refused to go a step farther. He was on the first pitch of the downgrade, but the two sleds were still on the level. Fritz went down through the murk to see what was stalling the brute.

When we came back his face was white. "Go take a look," he said.

I went. Bos'n was whining as I passed him. A few feet farther on, the curtain of fog ended. I found myself looking down a steep grade of fifty feet—then over a 2,000 foot cliff, down and down onto another glacier. If Bos'n had obeyed orders and gone ahead,

the momentum of those two sleds would have been too great to stop, and the whole business—ourselves included, in all likelihood—would have slid over the precipice.

I grabbed Bos'n's collar and led him with the team in a gingerly half circle up to level ground. We then got out of there—back down out of that cloud to the trail we knew.

There is a general north-country rule that you don't drive sled dogs when it's colder than forty below zero. (If you are smart, you don't go out yourself.) Another wise old team leader I had, named Sandy, taught me the immutability of this law. On boundary patrol one time I had neglected to bring along a thermometer. It was a bitter morning when I hitched up, but I reckoned there was no help for it—the northwest boundary had to be patrolled immediately, because there had been rumors of poachers moving in with their traps. So I slapped on the harness, yelled "Mush!" . . . and Sandy headed straight for his doghouse. It was his way of informing me he was not in favor of roaming about in air that would make a normal freeze feel like a spring thaw. I assayed the weather again—and decided to let the temperature take care of the poachers.

Later I found out it was seventy-three below zero that day.

A good team leader, I have since learned, will do that back-to-the-house trick every time the weather goes under forty below. He has a built-in thermometer, and I've come to depend on it.

Self-reliant as they are, things sometimes get to be too much for even the wisest of Alaska canines. One March I took a two weeks' leave to attend the Ice Carnival and dog races at Fairbanks. There had been an unusually heavy snow that winter, and, as I was going with my team down from Boundary Pass, an avalanche cracked loose from the mountain side; hundreds of tons of snow headed straight for us. The grade was steep and I had been using the sled brake.

There was only one chance I could see to avoid being buried alive and that was to outrun the avalanche. I yelled at Mike, my leader, and released the brake. Mike got the idea. We careered down that steep creek-bed like maniacs, me fighting to keep the sled from tipping over. It looked as if we were going to beat the avalanche—then another one abruptly tore loose from the slope above. Hurling chunks of snow began to catch up with us. A large

slab buried the sled; I jumped clear with inches to spare and scrambled up a steep slope on the far side of the creek. When the rumbling snowslide stopped I slid and ran back to the sled, now barely visible under the snow.

Two of my dogs were missing. I probed all around that sled with the tail of a snowshoe, at last I heard a grunt. I dug like mad and uncovered one dog. A few minutes later I dug out the other. They were unhurt—but I had never before seen dogs moan and shiver like that. They were badly scared. When I thought about it, so was I.

Some years ago, right after the war, dogs were banished from the park. We acquired two war-surplus snow cats, and the huskies, we thought, had gone the way of the horsecar.

The experiment lasted five years, during which time I learned how many different kinds of frustrating things can happen to an internal combustion engine in below-zero weather. Our object was light, fast patrol by one to three rangers, and the hauling of supplies. By 1950 we had the answer: internal combustion was condemned, on two counts. First, we proved conclusively that in some of this scenic area's narrow canyons, steep slopes and other difficult real estate, snow cats simply cannot operate; second . . . well, a husky's carburetor will not freeze up. Fuel for a dog team amounts to 1½ pounds of dried fish per dog per day. This costs about 25 cents a pound, whereas gasoline in Alaska runs around fifty cents a gallon. In case you consider one and a half pounds of dried salmon a skimpy day's ration, just think of it in terms of its equivalent in fresh fish—six pounds. That's plenty for a full-grown dog . . . in fact, it's a full meal for a logger, if your logger happens to like fish.

A pup's training for sled work begins six or seven months after he is weaned. Each one has his own personality; you have to study it as you start his training. First he has a collar slipped over his head and is tied up to let him get used to the feel of the thing. A few days of this, and the fuzzy-haired recruit is hitched right into a team between experienced sled dogs. You depend on these wise and mature workers to do most of the training of the youngsters; and some dogs, like some people, have much more of those special qualities of patience and understanding required of a good teacher.

After the freshman loses his fear of being hitched up with other

dogs, he quickly learns the simple orders: "Mush," "Whoa," "Lie down," and from then on he is watched carefully to see if he has any of the special qualities that will make him a team leader. We look for an extra measure of intelligence, principally, and self-control in emergencies. We also look for speed, because a lead dog has to be a fast traveller to keep his team stretched out.

A young dog picked as a potential leader spends at least a year running with his fellows before he is promoted to front position. However, one of the best leaders I ever had made the grade the first winter I hitched him to a towline. That was Mike, who came to me as a dark-gray husky pup with a lot of strength and an astonishing faculty for learning.

I started in by nearly spoiling him. I took him along for company to my fall patrolling station at the Toklat ranger cabin, when he was five months old and too young to be put in harness. I let him run as a roving partner on my patrols. I taught him to open and shut the cabin door, let him sleep with his head on my stockinged feet when I sat at the table writing in my diary, fed him hot cakes and bacon when I had them myself—in general, treated him like a house pet instead of a self-respecting work dog.

Once young Mike was sleeping on the porch and woke me in the middle of the night, scratching and whining pitifully at the barred door. I grabbed my gun, thinking that nothing but a pack of wolves could give him such a fright. When I opened the door he bounded in so fast he almost knocked me over.

I went outside, looking for those shining coals that wolves' eyes make in the night. I saw nothing, but close by I heard an owl hoot, then again and again. So this was what had scared that sixty-five pounds of dog meat! I came into the cabin laughing; but Mike looked at me with an expression that said plainly, "I don't see anything to laugh at! I'm scared" . . . and crawled under the bed as far as he could get. I let him stay, remembering how I felt back in Michigan when I first heard the soft swish of wings and hair-raising call of the great horned owl.

After a month's stay at the Toklat cabin, snow began to fall. I built a little sled and fashioned gear for Mike's harness. He was curious about the contraption, but after taking a good look and a few sniffs at it, seemed to understand its purpose. It wasn't long before he was pulling the sled whenever he went with me on my patrol

trips. Snow became deeper, my patrols grew harder. Mike was getting on so well in his harness I decided that he only needed a team to complete his education. I had a hunch he might make a good leader.

When it came time to go back to headquarters to get my winter assignment, Mike followed in my snowshoe tracks pulling his sled with a load of twenty-five pounds. It took about four hours to cover the eleven miles to the East Fork cabin, the first stop . . . but when I unhooked Mike at the end of the day he raced several times around the cabin to show me there wasn't a thing to the trip.

Picking out the dogs for my winter team, next day at headquarters, Mike was first in line with six other young dogs, to be led by Sandy, now an eleven-year-old veteran.

When I put Mike in the team with the others, he got frightened at once, held back and wouldn't budge. The others were anxious to get going. You can imagine what happened. Any time six huskies drag along one resisting pup, the pup is bound to get the rough end of the deal. Poor Mike was so stiff next morning that it was several days before I tried to work him again.

I'm sure it was my handling him out in the park, with no other dogs around, that got him off to this dismal start. Certainly he had to get over his anti-social attitude before his education to be a leader could even begin. Next time I hitched him up, it was with the two best dogs we had to break pups with, Bos'n and Skipper, both patient and understanding old-timers.

Those two fellows did the trick. In a week Mike was working happily alongside them, and branching out to work with other dogs.

Sandy, the leader, had served his stint as a full-time trail dog, but I still thought I could use him on short trips. At last, even on the easy runs, Sandy couldn't keep up with the young blood. I unhooked him from the towline and made him a "loose leader"—a dog who continues to lead his team but does no pulling. This was much easier on the old gentleman; he trotted along in front, his tail up over his back, proud as a peacock. He knew he was something special.

We ordinarily work a dog full time for six years, in the park, then give him only the softer jobs, finally pensioning him off entirely. Mike was the only possible candidate for Sandy's place, so I started his leadership training at once.

This is how I did it. On snowshoes, I made a couple of miles of trail on a wide river flat, putting in forks to the right or left at frequent intervals. Then I hitched five pups to a sled, with Mike in the lead. At "Mush," Mike started off in fine fashion. When he came to the first fork, I let him run a few feet beyond the branch-off to the right, then yelled "Whoa!" and stepped on the sled brake. After that I called out "Gee"—musher's language for "Turn to the right." Mike immediately looked around as if to say, "What the dickens does 'Gee' mean?" I walked to the head of the team, picked up Mike and deposited him on the right-hand trail, at the same time repeating the word "Gee."

At the next fork I repeated the performance. Then I taught him that "Haw" meant "Turn to the left." To my surprise, it took only one day to teach young Mike to respond perfectly to those words. In a few days he was doing it on clear snow, happily churning to right or left with no sign of a trail. I taught him to go slow simply by calling "Easy," and stepping gently on the brake. To finish off his preliminary education, I taught him to turn completely around by saying "Gee," and as he began to turn, calling from the rear of the sled, "Here, Mike." He would then make a complete 180-degree turn and be headed back toward me along the same trail.

And so young Mike was ready to step into the leader's position, and Sandy could retire to a life of ease. Of course, it takes more than one year for a dog to acquire the finesse of a top leader. But from fundamentals on, he'll be teaching you as you teach him.

Sometimes you get problem pooches, just as there are problem children. For instance, it was because of a little black husky pup that I made a discovery that has been very useful to me. I was winter-patrolling a section of the park with a light, fast team, doing the usual ranger's job of keeping tab on game conditions. Among my dogs were several that had never been worked before, one of which was a trim but balky little fellow named Blackie. Every time I hitched him up he would brace himself and hang back, making the others pull him as well as the load. This went on for several days, with me trying every trick I knew to get Blackie to buckle down.

One day, hauling a sledful of supplies up a steep hill, that black rascal held back so much the other dogs could hardly pull the sled. This was too much. I unhitched the free loader, tied him to a tree and went on. For two miles, I could hear that dog's mournful,

pleading yelps. I began to get the uncomfortable feeling that I was being a cruel master. So I was glad, three hours later, when the supplies were delivered and I could turn back.

When I reached his tree, I saw that that black pup had packed down the snow as far as his chain would reach, and had howled so much he had no voice left. But as I stood over him his entire quivering body begged for another chance. So I got his gear ready. When I placed the collar at his nose, he shoved it right into place, just like an old-timer. And that was the last time Blackie ever balked.

In the winter working season, sled dogs are like a winning football team. They are keyed up, eager and full of excess energy. Every so often that extra steam has to blow off, which it does when those vibrant bundles of fur and muscle get into one of their fang-flashing free-for-alls, or when the whole team goes off headlong on a wild, gleeful chase after anything from a rabbit to a caribou.

Here's the sort of thing that can happen: one winter I was building a line cabin in the park, and since I didn't have time to hitch and exercise my seven-dog team every day, I decided to turn two dogs loose at a time to run and play. I was aware of the fact that sled dogs like a good fight, but my experiment went along so well I tried turning four loose at a time. Everything continued happy and congenial. I decided those dogs had all been friends from puppyhood, and one day I turned them all loose at once. The animals looked surprised; then a couple started a tentative romp.

I was up on the roof of the cabin when it happened. Two of my most energetic huskies tied into each other, and before I could get down, all seven were heaped up in one growling, biting pile of fur—no one dog fighting any particular foe, just fighting. I joined them with my seven-foot dog whip doubled up, and pulled out one dog at a time, as fast as I could. When the snarls died down, not an animal seemed to have been harmed or even to have any tooth marks, but my whip arm was very tired.

Sometimes a couple of dogs carry on a personal feud that disrupts the entire outfit. I found this out with my first team; Jake, the half-wolf, held a deadly grudge against the smaller dog named Nig. Whenever Jake could tangle up the team to get in reach of Nig, there would be a scrap. I tried putting Jake just behind the leader, and Nig farthest in the rear, next to the sled. That made matters

worse. At every opportunity—and there were plenty—those two got the whole team into a snarling, snapping uproar that required the butt end of my whip to quiet.

Early in April I was travelling from the Kantishna station with Fritz Nyberg, when Jake and Nig put on their Hatfield-McCoy act. In the process, as usual, the young dogs tangled and started to fight, too. After we had unscrambled the mess, Fritz said, "Why don't you try working those two side by side?"

I was appalled. But Fritz really seemed to be serious about it. Finally I said, "It sounds crazy, but I've tried everything else. At least, if those two are going to fight, being together will localize it." I unhitched big Jake and cautiously slipped him into harness alongside Nig. Then I held my breath.

Those two bitter rivals paid absolutely no attention to each other. I was speechless. Nig looked around at the other dogs as though remarking, "I've told you all along I can pull as much as this big lug. Now I'll prove it." Jake rolled his eyes up at me, awaiting the word to go. His expression said plainly—to me, anyway—"You see, young fella, when you put two enemies side by side, all fair and square and equal, neither one ahead of the other—why, there's nothing to fight about."

A dog team is like any other form of locomotion in this respect: it is dangerous to let the motive power get out of control. One spring, bears had broken into all the ranger cabins on the park boundary, and I was detailed with another ranger, John Rumohr, to relay in supplies of lumber to make window and door shutters.

Travelling along the boundary to the Toklat cabin was easy until we came to a spruce forest near the river. The last half mile, the snow protected by the trees was deep and soft. I was ahead with my team, John was following with his. A quarter mile from the cabin, I stopped to give my dogs a rest; John let his team catch up to mine, to talk a while. When we were ready to start again, I waited for John to get back to his sled, and to hear his start-up command. We both had heavy loads, so we were snowshoeing in front of our sleds, steering with gee poles. Just as I yelled "All right" to my dogs I heard John call, "Grant, come quick!"

My dogs hadn't started yet; looking back, all I could see of John was his head sticking out from under his sled. He had apparently tripped and fallen under a runner. He shouted, "My leg's break-

ing!" I ran back as fast as my snowshoes could take me . . . but I knew that as soon as I touched John's sled his dogs would take it as a signal to start, and if John's leg wasn't already broken, it would be then for sure. When I got to his leader I led him back to the sled with me; but the dogs got tangled and started to fight. John held the leader while I lifted the sled off his leg. Only his snowshoes were broken—but he was badly bruised, and while he patched up his footgear he relieved his feelings by giving his dogs a good cussing, to which they listened with polite interest.

I am sure any competent phrenologist, examining the sleek head of an Alaskan sled dog, would discover a well-developed bump of humor. It's rough and ready, this comedy, but these fellows will put it on every day, as often as an unwary human gives them an opportunity. One favorite piece of business takes place when the snow is deep, on which occasions a man must snowshoe ahead of his team to break trail. I've done it hundreds of times, and every time my team leader has followed close behind me—so close, in fact, that unless I keep a sharp lookout, he will step on my snowshoes at regular intervals. I then fall flat on my face. As I thrash around in the snow, giving out with unkind language, my leader stands looking at me with all the innocent incredulity of a canine *Cantinflas*.

Huskies love a joke on one another, too. I once had the doubtful privilege of watching a single dog trip up sixteen of his companions in one snarling mass and then sit back and laugh at them. This, I regret to say, was Mike, my youthful prodigy. I was travelling with a seventeen-dog team because it was spring and the snow was melting in the daytime. Mike, as lead dog, had been let loose to run free in front of the team and thus make it go faster. He got about fifty feet ahead of the long string, then stopped. The dogs ran right up to him, apparently fell over him, and one after another they piled into the heap, just like a football scrimmage. They were all fighting mad.

I got there in a hurry, certain that Mike was underneath the scramble, probably being bitten to death. A little heavy work with my whip ended the fracas, but there was no Mike under the gang. I looked around. Off to one side, Mike sat on a snowbank, calmly watching the performance. His entire expression said, "Keep it up, boys; the joke's on you." After that, Mike did not run free for a while.

A little porcupine can make an entire dog team look foolish quicker than anything I know of. In spite of their ability to soak up a vast amount of knowledge, arctic dogs never seem to learn about porcupines. They'll go after those slow-moving bristlers time after time, heedless of the barbs that inevitably reward them. One of the worst foul-ups I've ever seen was caused by an innocent porky out for an early-morning stroll. Lee Swisher, Fritz Nyberg and I were hauling a heavy load, with three teams hitched in line. We had made a pre-sunrise start to get as much smooth sledding as possible while the snow was still crisp and icy from the night.

We were trailing along behind the load, watching the pink ice-cream effect on the mountains, when we suddenly saw the twenty-one dogs in a pile, apparently biting at one another, but not making a sound. When we reached the ruckus we found those dogs grabbing in furious silence at a large porcupine. The porker was almost picked clean, and every dog but Bos'n had a mouthful of quills.

We spent two laborious hours tweaking barbs out of those animals' mouths with pliers; even so, porcupine spines kept working out of the poor creatures' muzzles all summer. And then in the fall, came the pay-off. With the first snow, I took one of the teams out again, and we hadn't gone ten miles before the whole kit and kaboodle got after a porcupine!

Things like porcupine chases, I suppose, help a team driver not to get too exaggerated an opinion of the wisdom of his dogs. Nevertheless, a man can easily acquire an inflated estimate of their intelligence, living and working with them in the wilderness of the park, which in winter is a 3,000-square-mile snowfield brooded over by the highest mountain in North America. Perhaps I am guilty of such unconscious hyperbole. But let me give you one final instance of why men in the north value good, plain dog sense.

One September, I was assigned to accompany John Reed, of the U.S. Geological Survey, to set up markers on Muldrow Gacier at 4,200 feet, opposite the foot of Anderson Pass. This was near the location where Karstens, Fritz Nyberg and I had camped years before. The markers were to record the movement of the glacier over a period of years.

I joined John Reed at Mt. Eielson, and we left immediately to establish a camp at the foot of Anderson Pass. We each had a horse to ride and two pack horses for our outfits.

We arrived at the pass at two in the afternoon, tied up our horses and set up camp, then started out on the glacier to try to find enough rocks to build markers.

After about an hour the clouds began to drift in. We hurried to get back to camp . . . but before we had travelled a mile the storm caught us.

For the next twelve hours we put in a miserable time; we had neither ropes nor crampons, nor was our clothing built for this kind of storm. First it snowed, then it turned to rain. Then it got dark. We decided to stay right where we were, and spent practically all our time trying to keep from freezing. We stamped our feet, swung out arms and began running in circles. Finally we decided to try to find our way off the glacier, hoping we wouldn't stumble into a crevasse. It was so black dark we couldn't tell where our next step would take us.

John was leading, and I could make out that he was starting to slide. He fell flat and got himself stopped; but he knew if he moved he would begin sliding again. I took off my coat, flung it toward him, and he managed to get hold of it. With me bracing against the coat he was able to crawl back to safety. After that we gave up the idea of travelling. About four in the morning, when we had practically given up hope of getting off that miserable glacier, suddenly the clouds parted and there was bright moonlight. Had John Reed slid any farther he would have fallen off an ice cliff over two hundred feet high.

If we had had dogs along, not only would they never have led us that way. They would have known which was the right route back to camp, and taken it. By the moonlight, we could tell where our camp was and I don't believe I have ever covered a quarter mile in less time.

It was plain that the fall of the year was a bad time to be out measuring glaciers, especially equipped as we were. Next morning we packed our horses and beat it back to Mt. Eielson.

Horses did the summer hauling jobs in the park. But like most summer replacements, they weren't as good as the original. Here's an example of what I mean: one summer John Rumohr and I had to build a cache at the Lower Toklat ranger cabin, twenty-five miles north of where the park road crosses the river. We loaded our supplies onto a buckboard, hitched up our trusty (we thought) team of

horses, and when we arrived at the Toklat took off with our wagon over the riverbed. We crossed the river at least a dozen times, banging over gravel bars, and arrived at the cabin considerably shaken up.

There wasn't room in the buckboard for much horse feed, so we turned the horses loose to graze. Next morning we found their tracks headed upriver toward the road. "Let 'em go," I said. "We'll build the cache." We had the cache set up on its posts in short order, but while John was standing on a ladder doing a final chinking job, he fell off and landed on his back.

He was in great pain. I said, "John, I'm going to get the horses and take you to a hospital. A pole bunk is no place for you." John nodded.

It took me six hours to walk and wade the twenty-five miles to the road. I found the horses grazing peacefully near the road cabin; and inside I found an old saddle. I saddled one animal and put a lead rope on the other. That ornery critter promptly began a series of attempts to jerk my arm out of its socket as he made lunges for mouthfuls of grass. So I snubbed the rope to the saddle. At first everything went along fine, but to play it safe I unsnubbed the rope every time we crossed the river. Finally I didn't bother to unhitch it. At the next ford, as soon as the rope tightened my horse began to buck. The other animal made a quick jump, which threw mine off his feet; he started to roll over. That seemed to be a good time to part company.

The water was deep and fast. I swam the rest of the way across, but I had to chase those horses a quarter mile to catch them.

John was no better when I got the horses to the cabin, so I began padding the buckboard as well as I could for the trip out next day. That night I tied up the horses, and turned out early next morning to take them out to graze. As I came around the corner of the cabin I saw one halter rope broken; one horse, gone.

After breakfast I started the twenty-five mile trek back up the riverbed. I knew that was where that devil had gone. Halfway back to the road a wind came up, blowing dust from the dry sandbars into my face. The last twelve miles was slow, tedious going—and it didn't improve my disposition to see that horse feeding contentedly in a sheltered pasture alongside the road. Horse sense? I don't believe that beast knew how to think about anything . . . he even

walked twenty-five miles to graze. It was this same animal, next day, that slipped and fell on the wagon tongue, snapping it off. This happened four miles from the park road. I had to cut a spruce pole, lash it onto the tongue with haywire, then lead those horses very gingerly the last four miles to the trail. John helped me out with the cussing.

I suppose if we hadn't had horses we'd all have had to work harder in the summer—but we wouldn't have had so many nasty surprises, either. For instance, one time I was fording the McKinley River aboard a horse I didn't know was spooky. In mid-stream he sighted a floating tree branch and reared straight up in the air. I thought he would fall over backwards on me. I landed in the middle of glacier water on my back and swam ashore and as I was drying out my clothes in the Kantishna ranger cabin I thought, "A noble animal, the horse! And I say, nuts to nobility. I wish dogs grew bigger."

Of course, working with horses, or dog teams, is only one part of a ranger's job. But dogs being the only means of transport during those long winter months when the going is toughest, I guess it's natural that men in the arctic are overly partial to their huskies and malemutes. I figure I've mushed more than twenty thousand miles of snowy trail, and I'm convinced there's nothing to compare with careering along behind a dog team—sled creaking and crunching over the drifts, snow flying up from padded feet, every ear alert and every tail curled proudly over a sleek, rippling back.

12



A Hill to Climb

SOMETHING WAS COOKING IN THE summer of 1931 that was due to become a far more exciting dish than the Chief Ranger's job I had had snatched out from under my indignant nose.

This event had been on the fire for three years—ever since the visit to Alaska, in the summer of 1928, of a young Norwegian outdoorsman named Erling Strom. Strom was with a party of hunters who were prowling around the Alaska Range country after caribou and mountain sheep.

But there was something special about Erling Strom. He was a skier. In winter he divided his time between his ski school at Lake Placid, New York, and a ski camp at Mt. Assiniboine in the Canadian Rockies.

When Strom first laid eyes on the towering white mass that was Mt. McKinley, his reaction was the same as that of every skier at the sight of snow: he felt an overpowering urge to ski on it, from top to bottom.

He went back to the States talking about climbing Mt. McKinley on skis. He told me later he talked to any one and every one who would listen. "And," he added, "with absolutely no success." Then, in the spring of '31, a young man named Alfred D. Lindley, a Minneapolis attorney just out of law school, visited Erling at his Mt. Assiniboine camp. He listened with what Erling considered to be the usual polite interest to the idea of an expedition to the highest ski run on the continent.

That summer Alfred Lindley went on a visit to Alaska with his father. He saw McKinley and this, according to Erling Strom, was the result:

"I was running a pack trip out of Kayenta, Arizona, when I was

handed a telegram from Al Lindley saying, 'Would you still consider McKinley if I can swing it?' I got to a phone as fast as I could and wired back, 'What have I been talking about for three years? Sure!' "

Lindley immediately went to park headquarters and paid a call on Harry Liek in the superintendent's office. He needed information as well as permission for the climb. In the midst of the discussion, to Lindley's surprise Harry Liek said, "Mr. Lindley, I've ski'd in Yellowstone. I'd like to go on that expedition myself." He paused a moment, then added, "If the park service is in on the climb, you can use park dogs to haul supplies free of charge."

This was a big item. Transportation of supplies can eat up half an expedition's funds. Harry said one thing more:

"I have a very good man here, who I think would also like to go along. Grant Pearson."

It was typical of Harry Liek's reticence that he did not tell me a thing about his suggestion, even after I got a letter from Alfred Lindley, asking a lot of questions about the mountain and the climate. Liek was a man who would never make a statement until he was sure it was fact, not hope.

I was able to give Lindley the data he wanted about lower glacier conditions on the mountain, out of my experience; and on the best time to climb, out of my diaries which noted that April and May regularly had the clearest weather.

On a snowy, blustery day in January I arrived at headquarters and snowshoed down to the postoffice to pick up my mail. On top was a letter from my brother Harry, telling how hard the depression was hitting; among the ads for fishing tackle, Fairbanks clothing stores and bone-handled hunting knives was another letter from Alfred Lindley. I thought, "More questions," and stuck it in my pocket. Back on my bunk in the cabin, I opened it up.

"Would you like," it asked, "to join our party in the attempt to climb both the north and south peaks of McKinley?"

Would I!

I read that wonderful letter three times. I, Grant Pearson, was going to get the chance to stand on top of the highest chunk of land in North America. The summit of McKinley, which had seemed to get farther and farther away the closer I got to it and the more I

learned of the tremendous difficulties barring the way—that white crest against the blue was at last in reach.

When I finally put down Lindley's letter all the stories Harry Karstens had told me about his climb came tumbling back into my mind; the kind of supplies to assemble; the right equipment for glacier, rock and ice work; the best route to follow, up through McGonagall Pass and onto Muldrow Glacier, through the broken ice to Karstens Ridge, then on up Harper Glacier, and up and up . . . that letter from Minneapolis was a passport to altitudes I thought I'd never reach.

First thing I did some people have told me was completely unnecessary for me: I went into strict training for that twenty mile hike. I even quit smoking. I stretched my legs longer and harder on patrols. I ate muscle-building food.

At headquarters I made up lists of supplies, all long on nutrition and short on weight. Lindley was shipping up our equipment for rock and glacier work. Harry Liek and I held a conference around the superintendent's desk. "The last willows on Cache Creek," I said, "I think will be the best place for our base camp. Right here." I put a finger on the map where Cache Creek flowed north from the range toward the McKinley River. "From here, we can get through McGonagall Pass and onto Muldrow Glacier with dog teams."

In mid-March I left headquarters with a team of nine dogs and 750 pounds of food supplies, heading for Cache Creek, singing and swinging my arms in the crackling cold sunshine, eager to top the rise in the trail near the Savage where I'd get that first full view of the mountain I was now going to climb.

It took me ten long days to make it to Cache Creek. I struck deep, loose snow the second day out, and had once again to go through the tedious business of relaying supplies a couple of hundred pounds at a time. At Slim Carlson's old cabin two miles from Cache, I cut wood for tent poles, anchor logs and firewood—which put an extra haul in the supply relay. Finally, among Cache Creek's frozen last willows, I got the tent pitched, anchored to ten-foot ground logs, and a fire going inside. I had had to dig through five feet of snow to get to solid ground, and only the top of the tent showed above the surface, but there it stood at the foot of McGonagall Pass, the base camp for the Lindley-Liek Mt. McKinley Expedition.

With the sled empty, those willing dogs of mine practically scampered down the trail back to headquarters next morning, making the 94-mile run in two easy days. I was therefore on hand at the station on March 27th when a tall, dark-haired young fellow swung off the train and came forward grinning. "I'm Al Lindley," he said, "and you must be Grant Pearson." Harry Liek came up, and then we all noticed what seemed like a remarkable lot of unloading activity from the baggage car.

"Half that stuff isn't ours," Harry remarked. "Belongs to a scientist and mountain climber named Allen Carpe, who's taking an expedition up to 11,000 feet on McKinley to study cosmic rays."

"Eleven thousand?" said Lindley. "That's okay, then. We won't have to race him to the top."

"We'd probably lose," said Harry. "Carpe is landing his party on Muldrow by airplane. And, because it's a scientific expedition, the park service has agreed to haul supplies up for them, using our dog sled trail."

In the station, heaped up in one corner after the train left, was a most impressive pile of mountain climbing equipment; in another corner, equally impressive though not so high, was ours—crampons, ropes, lightweight tents and sleeping bags, ice axes, parkas, wind-proof pants, gasoline stoves . . . and leaning against the wall beside all this, four pairs of skis. Three pairs looked short for grown men—about five feet. The other pair were seven-footers. Erling Strom arrived two days later—a tall, wiry, keen-eyed outdoorsman—and explained the mystery. "I had those short ones specially made," he said, "so they'll be light enough to carry when we're going over rocks or through broken-up glacier ice." He looked a bit embarrassed. "I was going to have a short pair made for me, too, and then I thought, 'Erling, you like to ski on the long ones. Take them along, and work harder climbing the rocks.' I may be crazy." (I found out he was crazy about skiing. Today there are millions like him.)

Six days later the expedition to climb both peaks of Denali was assembled around a warm wood fire in its base-camp tent on Cache Creek—elevation 3,500 feet, 16,820 feet to go. The climbers: Al Lindley, Erling Strom, Harry Liek, Grant Pearson; in charge of the two dog teams hauling supplies for us and for the cosmic ray party: Chief Ranger Lou Corbley. Lou had two helpers on the

hauling job, Ranger John Rumohr and a civilian dog-musher, Whitey Pearson (no relation of mine).

In the firelight I saw Harry Liek glancing around at us from under his shaggy eyebrows. "We're going to be climbing up on top of a lot of geology," he said. "Strange thing—the highest peak on the continent isn't volcanic at all. It's granite that got squeezed up through a fault, by the pressure of the Ice Age glaciers farther south. Went up through a stratum of black slate that wasn't as high as we are now. Later the whole business rose up. You can still see that black caprock on some of the park's flat-topped foothills. If all that heaving about hadn't happened so slowly, it would have been kind of disconcerting to the mammoths and camels and saber-toothed tigers that lived around here a million years ago."

"It may still have the heavens," I remarked. "They keep revising the figures on McKinley's height, always a few feet higher."

"Then we'd better hurry," said Al, "or this Denali may get clean away from us. By the way—what's 'Denali' mean?"

"Indian for 'High One,'" I told him, "though some people will tell you it also means 'Home of the Sun.' The natives have a legend about it: long ago a party of hunters were camping in mid-summer on the south side of the range, and saw the sun apparently disappear right into the mountain—then come out the other side in the morning. They returned to their village and reported, 'We have found the sun's home! He goes into it at night and comes out in the morning.' Crazier things have seemed reasonable to white men."

"I like 'Denali' better," said Erling. "Why 'McKinley'?"

"Blame a man named Dickey for that. He was a Princeton graduate who had come up to Alaska to get rich. In 1896 he and a friend were hunting gold on the Susitna River where there are fine views of the mountain. They fell in with a couple of other prospectors who were rabid promoters of Democratic Candidate William Jennings Bryan's free silver idea. They bent Dickey's ear for days on the subject and to get even, Dickey named the mountain after the Republican champion of the gold standard, wrote a newspaper article describing the great peak and the name stuck."

That night we set up one of our mountain tents to try it out: 8 x 8 center pole type, walls two feet high, made of scotch sail silk. Rolled up, it made a 16-pound cylinder a foot long and 5½ inches across. We had two of them, one to cook in and one to sleep in.

It worked fine although you couldn't really call that night a test, down in the valley away from mountain winds.

We had one other piece of equipment that needed a lot of trying out, at least by me. Skis. Since my kid barrel-stave days I had been on skis just once and that was riding behind a dog team, with the dogs doing the steering. Moreover, Erling had introduced me to something I'd never seen before: skins of hair seal shaped to fit the ski bottom, with straps to cinch them on. "They're climbing skins, for steep places," Erling said. "The fur lies flat when you slide your ski forward, but it roughs up, like stroking a cat the wrong way, if your ski starts to slip back. Acts like a brake. You take 'em off, of course, going down."

Next morning Erling poked at the snow and said, "Ten inches of powder. Great!" He was practically licking his chops—a mannerism I have since found to be common to skiers encountering powder snow.

I got my feet lashed onto my five-foot boards with their skin bottoms and began to plod about the camp, feeling as awkward as a duck in mud. "You're doing fine," Erling said. He pointed at a hill back of camp. "Try going up that and coming down."

I shambled up to the top and took off the skins. Then I started down. To my surprise, I found I could keep my balance by leaning forward. The skis carried me at a good clip, and when the snow levelled out at the bottom, my ski tips kept right on aiming downhill with the result that I plunged face forward into the soft snow, so deep I figured I wouldn't get out till summer. When I finally got my head above the surface Erling Strom was bending over me, plainly trying to keep from laughing.

"When you hit the level you should have taken the weight off your ski tips," he said in a patient school-teacher voice. I spit out some of his precious powder snow and said nothing.

Our plan that day was to break a trail up over McGonagall Pass, down onto Muldrow Glacier, and far enough up the glacier to locate a site for our next camp. At the foot of the camp we faced a steep climb; and while I was striving to put one ski ahead of the other, and watching carefully to see it didn't take off sideways on its own, the others got far ahead of me. I would step forward and my skis would slide back in the soft stuff, skins or no skins, first one ski then the other. "These things," I thought, falling over backwards,

"are just a fad." On snowshoes, I wouldn't have had any trouble keeping up with the rest. Finally Erling looked around, saw what was happening and came whooshing back, stopping in a beautiful spray of snow.

"I thought you were watching what we were doing," he said.

"How could I watch you? I had all could do watching what my own skis were doing."

"All right. Grant, I'm going to teach you skiing, and I'm going to do it in a hurry. You won't be a fancy skier, but you'll be able to keep up with us." I said, "The hell with these skis. I should have brought snowshoes." Erling just laughed. "You'll change your mind before long."

He then showed me how to climb by herringboning . . . stepping forward with the tips of the skis pointed out, inner edges biting into the snow. You left a herringbone track in the snow—and you went uphill without slipping back. "On most slopes you can do it without skins," Erling remarked professionally. When the slope got steeper he said, "Turn sideways to the hill and side-step up—like this."

After fifteen minutes of this intensive cram course I had to agree with my instructor. I could climb a steep hill more easily and faster on skis than I could on snowshoes.

We caught up with Harry Liek and Al Lindley at the top of McGonagall Pass. A few hundred feet below us stretched the great white highway we were to follow up and westward for ten miles and 6,000 feet of ascent—Muldrow Glacier. At its head rose the grim 4,000 foot ice-fall from Harper Gacier down to Muldrow; and beyond, sixteen miles by airline, rose the high challenge—Denali's great south peak.

We had to get down onto the glacier. McGonagall Pass dropped off steeply. I took off my ~~skins~~ and slid gingerly downgrade, following the others in a traverse; but when it came time to turn I was in trouble. When I tried to turn one ski, it of course pointed downhill; I hastily pulled it back parallel to the slope. I had no ambition to go down to Muldrow disguised as a snowball.

Erling saw my predicament and yelled, "Do a kick-turn like this!" Then, while I clung precariously to the slope, he performed a weird and astonishing maneuver: he kicked his downhill leg straight up in the air until the heel of the ski was in the snow and

the rest was standing perpendicular; then, with a twist of his leg he brought the ski down pointing the other way. His skis were now parallel to the slope, pointing in exactly opposite directions. From this dichotomous position he took the weight off his uphill ski and swung it around, yelling "Now you do it!" I started my kick-up with more desperation than confidence. A strong gust of wind would have blown me over, but the trick worked, though I submit that a 40-degree slope is no place to teach a fellow the balancing act called a kick turn.

Muldrow, like all ice floes, held the threat of hidden crevasses; so we roped up, about fifty feet apart, before breaking trail up the glacier. It was glassy smooth for the first four miles, but when we got up to 7,200 feet elevation by our aneroid barometer, the surface began to be cut up—yawning crevasses, big and little, threatened us with a plunge into blue depths.

"This," I said, "is about far enough. We can move our camp up to here, then study out the best way around these traps." We slid back down the glacier, herringboned and sidestepped up to the top of McGonagall Pass, and unroped. Right there I found out how little I knew about the downhill part of skiing. Erling said, "Do just what I do," and swooped off down the slope, performing beautiful stem Christies and Telemarks. Al Lindley followed, putting on almost as good a show.

Erling told me later, "I was skiing conservatively, and that's what I wanted you fellows to do. After all, we were up on a mountain a hundred miles from help, and no one had ever heard of a Ski Patrol. We had on loose cross-country bindings that would make fancy tight turns very dangerous."

Harry Liek looked dubiously down at the two skiers making their graceful wide swings below us. "I wish," he muttered, "there hadn't been so much level ground in Yellowstone." He took off, and I followed.

I thought my skis were going to jump out from under me. I tried to slow down by turning, as Erling had. I slowed down, all right . . . by doing an egg-beater in the snow. Harry wasn't doing much better. We must have had fifty spills apiece in the two miles back to camp. I was ready to quit when I sighted our tent top, but Erling was waiting for us. "Look," he said, "when you start a turn, put your weight on the downhill ski. How about going up that hill and

trying it?" So I climbed up that pesky little hill that had been my undoing before, and tried it. I found I could turn, and in turning slow myself down.

Erling was grinning broadly when I pulled up. "Grant," he said, "you may not be an expert yet, but from now on you will certainly look less like a snowman on a bender."

Next day, we figured, the climb would officially start; and that night, sitting around the fire in the big tent, the talk ran to those who had attempted McKinley before.

"The record to date," I said, "is seven failures and only two successes."

I like telling stories, so I told them about the most spectacular failure of all, that of Dr. Frederic Cook.

"Isn't that," Al asked, "the same Doc Cook who claimed he beat Admiral Peary to the North Pole?"

"That's right. That was in 1909. When investigation showed he'd never even been near the Pole, the reaction against Cook led to exposing as a fake his earlier claim that he'd reached the top of McKinley in 1906."

"He got away with it for three years?" Al was incredulous.

"Not only got away with it—he made quite a bit of money out of his book, *To the Top of the Continent*. The book's in the library at park headquarters."

"What kind of man does a thing like that?" Harry Liek wondered.

"He was a strange man, half scientist, half mountebank. He had made an honest attempt to climb the mountain three years before, in 1903."

"The fellow really tried?"

"Yes, and he took along all the topographic maps and data he could get his hands on. But he made his try up Peters Glacier on the north face, and was stopped by the same tremendous cliffs that had halted another party two months before, led by Judge Wickersham of Fairbanks. In 1906 Cook made another honest try, this time from the south side. His party included two good mountaineers, Belmore Browne and Herschel Parker, but sheer precipices prevented them from getting even close to the high ground. The expedition broke up. Then, Cook went back with one man, a packer named Edward Barrille. They hiked along up Ruth Glacier, which leads north toward McKinley. Cook's report in his book is factual until

he reached the glacier amphitheater; then he grows grandiloquent and vague, and writes of climbing 'up and up to the heaven-scraped granite at the top.' Three years later, in the midst of the North Pole controversy, Edward Barrille signed an affidavit that he and Cook had never reached the summit."

"And that cooked Cook," Al commented.

"Not all at once. Cook denied it, of course, and for a while a lot of people believed his denial. But unfortunately he had taken a photograph, which he captioned in his book, 'The top of our continent. The summit of Mt. McKinley, the highest mountain in North America. Altitude, 20,300.' Herschel Parker and Belmore Browne studied that picture, and got an idea. In the summer of 1910, as part of another unsuccessful McKinley expedition, they also went up Ruth Glacier, acting as sleuths. They found the precise spot where Cook had taken his photograph, and proceeded to make an exact duplicate. The spot was twenty airline miles from McKinley, at an altitude of possibly 5,000 feet."

I glanced around at the others. They were all scowling into the fire. I've found out since that nothing makes a mountain climber madder than someone claiming he's been on top of high acreage when he hasn't been.

"Give old Doc Cook this much," I said. "He was also indirectly responsible for the most spectacular success in scaling the mountain." Then I told about the famous Sourdough Expedition of 1910.

It all began in Billy McPhee's saloon in Fairbanks, in January of 1910. A discussion was raging as to whether Cook had really climbed the peak. Five miners from the Kantishna got together at the bar and stated flatly that they didn't believe Doc Cook's story; furthermore, they announced, if anyone would put up fifteen hundred bucks for expenses, they would climb that mountain themselves, it was in their backyard anyway, and find out if it looked the way Doc Cook said it did.

McPhee and two other liquor dealers promptly plunked \$500 each onto the bar.

Then and there the expedition took shape, under Tom Lloyd, who was joined by Charlie McGonagall, one-time friend and partner of Harry Karstens; Bill Taylor, Pete Anderson and Bob Horne, all Kantishna prospectors; and E. C. Davidson, a surveyor. By March 1 the six had set up a base camp at the mouth of Cache

Creek, about three miles from our camp. At this camp Davidson and Horne quit the party after a row with Lloyd; but the men who were left still had the great advantage of actual knowledge of the McKinley terrain. Pete Anderson had crossed and recrossed the range near McKinley eleven times, by the pass named after him; Lloyd had also gone over Anderson Pass, with horses. McGonagall, following quartz leads, had studied the mountain for hours from the high foothills.

Anderson and McGonagall prowled around the hills until they found the break-through to Muldrow which they named McGonagall Pass. From there, as Pete Anderson told me about it later, it was practically a stroll up to the top, at least for him and Bill Taylor. They moved their camp up to 12,000 feet, where Lloyd got altitude sickness and could go no farther. Taylor, Anderson and McGonagall set out one morning at 2 a.m., to climb the narrow ridge to the upper glacier. They had clumsy home-made climbing irons strapped to their moccasins, and home-made hooked pike poles in their hands. They didn't bother to rope themselves together, and they cut no steps. It was every man for himself, with reliance solely on crampons. They hadn't the faintest idea of how to climb a mountain. In addition, they were hauling up to the top a fourteen foot spruce flagpole four inches in diameter.

"A flagpole!" Erling looked aghast.

"Yes. Those fellows proposed to set it up on the north peak so the folks in Fairbanks could see it. They had an exaggerated idea of the power of telescopes.

"At 16,000 feet the altitude got Charlie McGonagall. Taylor and Anderson went on with their flagpole, hauling it to 19,000 feet, then returning to help McGonagall back to the 12,000 foot camp. Two days later Taylor and Anderson walked up the mountain, set up their flagpole on the last exposed rocks, and climbed the final three hundred feet to the north peak, 19,470 feet elevation. There they let out a couple of whoops and performed the usual exultant hand-shaking ceremony of successful mountain climbers.

"I asked Bill Taylor later what food he took along on the 7,000-foot dash to the top. Bill said, 'Oh, I had a thermos full of coffee and three doughnuts. I ate two of the doughnuts.' Sturdy mountaineer fare, eh?"

"But," Harry Liek said, "they didn't get to the top."

"Sure. But if you ask me, that climb has to be rated as a smashing success, even though Taylor and Anderson didn't go up the higher south peak. They firmly believed they were on top, and if they had had any doubts they could easily have walked the four miles over to the other peak. In fact, Pete Anderson actually started across, but halfway over decided 'the hell with this,' and came on down the mountain."

"And this is the route we're following," Al mused. "If those sourdoughs found it so easy, why didn't somebody else try it?"

"Somebody did, two years later. Browne and Parker again, this time with another climber named Merle La Voy. By the last of June in 1912 they had followed the sourdoughs' path to within a short distance of the top; then a sudden blizzard pounced on them. They were driven, half frozen, back to their camp at 17,000 feet. Two days later, the three made another dash for it. Clouds dropped down and wrapped them in chilling, wind-driven mist. They couldn't see ahead, and had to follow their footsteps back to camp. By this time they were out of food, and had to retreat back down the mountain."

"Tough luck," said Al.

"Tough luck, yes, but it saved them from being dead heroes. The day they got back to their base camp, this is what happened—and it's the reason no one else has ever been able to go up McKinley as those sourdoughs did: in June of 1912, Mt. Katmai, three hundred and fifty miles to the south, erupted in the tremendous volcanic explosion that created the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. When Katmai blew her head off, she caused an earthquake that shook the Alaska Range. Denali gave a heave that shattered the ready-made path Taylor and Anderson had used to go around the 4,000-foot icefall from the head of Muldrow to the upper glacier. This path was the northeast ridge; where the two sourdoughs had had a steep, narrow, but smooth ridge route to follow, there was now an unholy mess. The earthquake had shaken that ridge to pieces from top to bottom. The sides and top were a chaos of huge rocks, snow and ice blocks that made every step a peril; at the foot, chunks of ice 50 to 60 feet high were up-ended in wild disorder."

"I know about that," Erling remarked. "Europeans call such a jumble a serac, but whatever you call it, it is no fun to have to squirm, squeeze, crawl and hack your way through."

The party around our fire looked thoughtful. From the day of that quake, I went on, there were not only dozens of new crevasses splitting Muldrow—that northeast ridge had become a jagged rock-and-ice spine a climber would have to go along inch by inch.

"Only four men in the world have ever done it," I added, ". . . and that was nineteen years ago."

Harry Karstens was the man who figured out a way to conquer the shambles of the ridge that is named after him. He was guiding Archdeacon Hudson Stuck and two other climbers in 1913, when he came upon the awesome destruction of the route Taylor and Anderson had told him about.

This was the latest in a series of setbacks. The earthquake had collapsed the snow bridges across all the big crevasses; Harry had had to engineer a way for the party to build their own bridges by cutting blocks out of the glacier. Halfway up, their mountain tent had caught fire and burned up, along with a lot of food; Harry sat down and sewed together sled tarps to make another tent. Now, looking up at the forbidding contours of that shattered ridge, Harry said, "Anyway, our ice axes didn't burn up. Come on. This is going to be like cutting a staircase three miles long."

That is exactly what the party did, all the way to the upper basin, from which their four-man ascent to the summit of McKinley was merely a matter of hard, plodding work in oxygen-thin air. Besides Karstens and Episcopal Archdeacon Stuck, the expedition included a 21-year-old Tennessean, Robert Tatum, a postulant for holy orders at the Episcopal mission in Nenana; and Walter Harper, also 21, a half-breed Indian boy and the archdeacon's interpreter on visits to Indian villages.

On the final dash to the summit, Karstens did something that showed the kind of man he was: he re-arranged the order of the rope-up, putting Walter Harper in the lead, followed by Karstens, Tatum and Stuck. Thus, the honor of being the first person to stand on the continent's highest peak went to a native Alaskan. A further honor came later—the upper glacier was named Harper Glacier after the husky young Indian.

From the top the party could look across to the North Peak and see the sourdoughs' flagpole planted there three years before. Archdeacon Stuck was set on leaving a memento of his own on the mountain, but a more scientific one. He was carrying a minimum-

recording thermometer graduated to 95 degrees below zero; this thermometer was a special instrument that registered lows and never went back up. It would register the lowest temperature and then stay there until a lower temperature came along. On the way back down Stuck cached this delicate device in the ridge rocks at 15,000 feet, where it could easily be found by anybody else making the climb.

"And," I said, winding up the story I was telling my fellow climbers, "no one has been up McKinley since, so I intend to find that thermometer when we get up there."

Al Lindley nodded thoughtfully. "We'll get up there, all right, if Katmai doesn't put on another performance for our special benefit."

For a while we all sat looking into the fire, thinking about what lay ahead—all the things we'd have to be able to do, and all the things the mountain might have up its granite sleeve.

13



Twenty Thousand Feet Up

NEXT MORNING THE CACHE CREEK tent was a scene of hurried, purposeful activity as we all assembled crampons, goggles, ice axes, sleeping bags and all the other gear we'd need to go uphill. I was resolutely clamping down on my excitement, and I guess the others were, too; but I couldn't help remembering my first sight of Denali, and telling old Diamond Willow Holmes that some day I was going to climb it.

I wasn't really aware of the fact that when you challenge a mountain, you challenge a very tricky opponent. Mountains don't like having people tramping across their immaculate snow faces. And mountains are apt to do something about it.

Outside, Whitey Pearson was hitching up a dog team. Our plan was to have the dogs haul up the supplies we'd need immediately to set up our camp on the glacier. The four of us in the climbing party would follow the sled trail on skis which we did with the ease and jesting high spirits that start off most mountain climbs.

"Denali, here we come!"

"Ssh, don't tell him. He'd split a crevasse lip laughing."

Four hours later, we unloaded the sled at the site of our 7,200-foot camp, where Muldrow began to crack up; while Whitey went back to Cache Creek for another load of supplies, we put up our mountain tents—one to cook in, one to sleep in, and one army pup tent to serve as a food cache. When the three little tents were up and anchored against storms, Al struck a pose and announced, "This collection of elegant-looking residences I hereby proclaim Camp Number One. The McKinley Two-Peak Climb is officially under way!" We gave off with appropriate cheers, then Erling and I set to work to produce something to eat.

Right there we ran into an unexpected difficulty. We had to melt ice or snow to get cooking water; I looked at the frozen stuff in the pot on our gasoline stove and said, "Why doesn't it hurry up and melt?"

Harry Liek was breaking out the hardtack. He glanced at the pot and said, "Altitude. At this elevation the water that has melted boils away at a lower temperature, so it doesn't heat up the rest of the ice so fast. That explain it?"

"Yes, but it doesn't help. I'm hungry."

It took thirty minutes to get that cooking water melted and the dinner going. Next morning we made allowance for our high-level living, and managed to breakfast at 6:30 a.m., on bacon, concentrated pea soup, hardtack and cocoa; then we roped up, thirty feet apart, to explore a path through or around the crevasses.

There is nothing like being roped together to give a party of strong individualists like mountain climbers a feeling of mutual dependence and fellowship. When we were sitting around talking, in that tent on Cache Creek, we were sort of feeling our way toward each other; roped together, we knew darn well we were a team and I think we all believed it was going to be a good one.

Before we started pushing our skis uphill, Harry Liek squinted at the crevasse-split glacier ahead. "Looks like good going up the left side," he said, "close to Karstens Ridge."

Erling eyed the ridge. "Maybe so. But look at all that snow that would be hanging right above us. A loud, unkind word would bring an avalanche down on us."

I recalled hearing that where snow is clinging to a steep slope, even the small air-vibration of a sneeze will start tons of it coming down. We changed our course to mid-glacier.

A glacier is not the broad highway it looks from a distance; it's an obstacle course, booby-trapped with crevasses camouflaged under crusted snow, with the widest cracks in the middle. We were trying to find a dog-team path through these interweaving hidden crevasses . . . and at noon we were back at camp, defeated.

"Maybe," said Al, "we could edge a *little* closer to the ridge, and get around some of those cracks before they start." We tried it; and by taking careful soundings we were able to lay out a fairly decent route up the glacier.

There is a ritual to trail-blazing on a glacier that is as strict as the

changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. The lead man on the rope pokes along with an axe or a pole, probing the snow for crevasses, trying to figure out how wide they are—some are twenty feet across—and hunting for a firm snow bridge over them. At danger points, when he is testing a bridge, the second man jams the point of his ice axe into the snow and loops the rope around it. (An ice axe has a sharp point like a pickax on one side of the head, a cutting edge on the other, and a sharp spike at the end of the three-foot handle. The spike is what you probe with.) The rear man on the rope goes along planting black-tipped willow wands in the snow, to mark the trail if a sudden snowstorm should obliterate all their tracks.

What with this constant poking and prodding about, we must have looked as if we were out on Muldrow hunting for clams. But we got results. Before we started back, our willow wands were marking a trail up to 9,000 feet.

Meanwhile, Whitey was hauling supplies up from the base camp, and in the course of this we ran into another eccentricity of glaciers: they provide nothing to tie a dog to. We solved the problem by burying a long rope, anchoring it with poles, then chaining the dogs to the rope.

Three days later we christened Camp Two, at the 9,000-foot end of our willow-wand trail. It was the first trip over that trail for our dogs, and they made slow going of it. That was all right with us, but it gave the mountain a chance to throw a devilish little temptation our way. Strolling along, we spotted what looked like a nice vein of quartz in the face of a steep ridge; and like all Alaskans, we started over on the double to see if it were gold-bearing.

It was Al who saw the hook in the lure. "Look up above," he said suddenly. "Seems to me I've seen hanging glaciers like that in the Canadian Rockies. Anybody want to be a dead millionaire?"

We eased away from there, our prospecting blood considerably chilled. That afternoon Lou Corbley and John Rumohr arrived with a much more acceptable kind of bonanza: they were bringing up two sled-loads of supplies for the cosmic ray party, and John had included two fat roasted chickens for us. There is only one best way to enjoy roast chicken, I discovered; have it served at 9,000 feet up on Mt. McKinley.

Next day John and I were hauling supplies from Camp One to

our new set-up, when we found out an uncomplimentary fact of Nature: she isn't much on engineering. The snow bridges she builds don't stand up under traffic.

I was following behind John when I saw his dog team suddenly disappear through the snow. John slammed on the sled brake and hollered, "Grant! Come quick!"

When I got there two of the dogs were dangling in the air over a crevasse, held only by their neck lines. I edged toward the crevasse lip while John held the brake clamped down hard. The snow at the lip could easily have cracked off and slid me into cold storage but I managed to snag the two pooches out by hooking my ski pole into their harness and snaking them back to safety. I guess John, watching me, was more tensed up than I was; he had his pipe in his mouth, and he bit right through the stem.

John is a quiet fellow with long legs and a wide smile—a friendly man, but he must have grown to hate that stretch of trail. Next morning as he was approaching camp with the last relay of supplies, his sled broke through another snow bridge, this time after the dogs and he had crossed safely. Harry and I saw the sled go through, and scrambled down the trail. It took a half hour's grunting, heaving effort by all three of us on the sled lines, to save our supplies from the glacier's maw.

Climbing a mountain like McKinley is a matter of relaying tents, bedding, fuel and food, but mostly food. Relay after relay, and in those days, no super-concentrated rations to lighten the weight. In the course of relaying my way to the top, I figure I climbed that darn mountain three times, and all for one reason: blizzard insurance.

Usually these gales burst on the toiling climber when he is well up on the trail, along ice-capped ridges and peaks, or perilously perched in tiny high-altitude camps. And those ice-filled winds will try every trick, from blowing your tent to pieces to picking up a snowshoe and hitting you in the face with it.

But mostly they keep you tied down, sometimes for days and days. There is only one thing to do about a blizzard: wait it out. That means you have to haul enough supplies to be able to stay put until the blizzard gives up and leaves. Then you can keep on climbing.

When we had hauled all our supplies up to Camp Two, the relaying began all over again. We planned to go up Muldrow another 2,000 feet and make our next camp at the head of the glacier. This was by far the toughest going we'd had. Our route lay through a mess of ice blocks called the Big Serac, formed by avalanches coming down off Karstens Ridge. Threading among this debris, the trail went up a thousand feet in less than half a mile. I had the first trip with a team of thirteen dogs on one sled. Even with all this dog power, when we hit the steep part of the serac my yelling "Mush, you!" meant nothing. I had to leave part of the load before the dogs could make it.

What was worse, the only feasible dog route skirted right along the bottom of Karstens Ridge—smack in the path of any avalanche that happened to want to let go. To avoid running into any of Denali's thousand-ton snowballs, we did most of our hauling early in the morning, when the temperature was low and thawing hadn't loosened the ice.

I unloaded at the top of the serac, ten thousand feet up, and made some special preparations to go back down for another relay. I knew my dogs would make the return trip so fast they'd be practically out of control; so I rough-locked the sled runners by wrapping several dog chains around them. I also unhitched the tugs from half the dogs, so they could only pull by their neck lines. At that, when dogs, sled and I started down that pitch between the ice blocks I might just as well have been riding a half-mile-long roller coaster.

Early next day we trundled all our stuff up to the head of Muldrow and set up Camp Three at 11,000 feet. What a spot for a camp! A mile away was one of the largest ice falls in the world, from Harper Glacier four thousand feet almost straight down to Muldrow. You could stack four Empire State Buildings one on top of the other alongside that Harper Ice Fall, and after you got out of the last elevator you'd still have a long climb, unless you inadvertently took the express down, aboard an avalanche.

Those avalanches came thundering over the headwall almost every half hour, shaking the whole glacier and setting up a five-minute snowstorm of pulverized ice.

From a safe distance, an avalanche is one of the most spectacular

ways of delivering ice you ever saw. You'll be admiring a beautiful, glittering snow-and-ice cliff, when suddenly there will be a crack and a rumble, and thousands of tons of landscape will come booming down the mountain. If you are walking too close to the cliff, you'll just naturally take delivery of that ice.

McKinley provides perfect avalanche conditions over thousands of acres of its slopes, if you can call such an agency of sudden death perfect. All year round, the mountain above 6,000 feet is covered with snow, and because it rises so steeply from its base there is constant danger of ice falls. The trick is to avoid those avalanche slopes, or if you have to pass one, do it early in the morning.

On really steep slopes, you can't even count on low temperature to keep the ice glued in place; at Camp Three the boom of avalanches coming over the headwall kept startling us awake intermittently all that first night.

The real work of climbing was to begin next day. No more dogs. We aimed our field glasses at Karstens Ridge next morning, and lined out a foot route up to the saddle of the ridge, five hundred feet above us. We would then have to scramble along the steeply rising ridge-top for two miles before we could ease off onto Harper Glacier. Erling Strom and I unlimbered our ice axes and set out to chop steps in the ice to the top of the ridge, then on up its knife edge.

Between Erling and me a friendly contest had developed from Camp One on. Each of us found himself trying to outdo the other in camping skills and packing feats. We had along a hook scales, and insisted on weighing each other's packs—if Erling had tucked in an extra can of ski wax, I tucked in an extra something in my pack. We were both ahead of Harry and Al in mountain lore and we found we were slightly ahead physiologically, too. We had compared heartbeats; Erling and I were a stand-off again, at 52 beats per minute (which I understand is considered unusually low); Al Lindley had a count of 60, Harry Liek 70. (It's been shown in later studies on Himalaya climbers that the slower the heartbeat, the better a man works at high altitudes.)

Erling and I hacked steps in the ice-hard snow of Karstens Ridge for three hours, taking turns doing the chopping. The ridge was narrow; in places it came to a sharp peak. Here we put on crampons and roped up. We also developed a special safety technique

for step-cutting: while the lead man was chopping steps, the second man had his ice axe securely anchored in the snow, with the rope wrapped around the handle. As Climber No. 1 moved ahead, Climber No. 2 let out more rope. In mountaineering circles this is known as a belay.

When all the rope was out, No. 1 man simply belayed No. 2 man up to his position, and the two climbers began the whole business over again. The idea of keeping a taut rope on a moving man is this: if he slips, he'll be stopped (hopefully) before he can pick up momentum.

We cut a quarter mile of steps in this fashion, and then gingerly went back down our stairs to camp. Harry and Al had a banquet waiting for us made up of mulligan, canned chicken, hardtack, cooked dried fruit, cocoa and walnuts. We wouldn't be eating in such fancy fashion again, because this was the end of the line for grub hauled by dog sled.

Before John Rumohr took the dogs down, next day, he ambled over to me and fished a gold-nugget watch chain out of his pocket.

"Here, Grant. I want you to take this up to the top for me."

"What for? Is it good luck?"

"Sure." Then he broke into a broad grin. "But what I really want is to be able to say I've got something that's been to the top of McKinley."

Alaskans are as crazy as any other Americans about souvenirs. I've often thought that right there I missed a wonderful opportunity to get rich. At the top of that mountain I should have filled my pockets with pebbles, which I could later sell for handsome sums as souvenirs from the continent's highest peak.

With the watch-chain in my pocket, I went up the ridge with Erling next morning, each of us carrying a forty-pound pack. The relay to Camp Four was on. Our steps had drifted full of snow, which we had to clean out; we then went to work cutting new steps until we spotted a fairly level place, just over the ridge on the sunny south side. There we cached our loads and dug out just enough of the top snow to make a level floor for our tents. Altitude, 12,000 feet.

On our way back the mountain threw a howling wind down on us. After creeping along for a while, we finally had to belay ourselves down the ridge, reversing our uphill safety technique. Next

day, of course, the wind had drifted our steps full of snow again.

While the avalanches fired parting salutes at us, we abandoned Camp Three. We left the cosmic ray party's gear, hauled up on our dog sleds, tightly baled in canvas; we also left a lot of our own grub, some gasoline for our stove, and other stuff we'd need on the way out. From here on we'd travel light, that is, comparatively. Erling had his seven-foot skis lashed on his pack, and I had my five-footers. We must have looked like the world's most fanatic winter sportsmen, climbing those ice steps at 12,000 feet just to go skiing.

It was April 23rd, and far below spring was melting the snow in dark patches along the river bottomlands. Directly beneath us, 2,500 feet down, was the winding arm of Muldrow called Traleika Glacier; bordering it was the unexplored south area of the park . . . deep canyons and unnamed peaks ten to thirteen thousand feet high, standing like white sentinels. We felt high and alone, there at Camp Four; and the brilliant alpine glow cast on the high part of the mountain by the setting sun made us feel even more cut off from the rest of the world.

This camp clinging to the side of the ridge was set up very carefully; its location was high enough up so we had to expect severe storms to hit us before we moved. All corners of our light tents were securely pinned with long aluminum stakes. As extra storm anchors, every evening we drove our ice axes into the snow alongside the guy ropes.

Next morning I announced, "The Strom-Pearson step-cutting crew will now start chopping the way to Camp Five. Is 'Excelsior' the word?"

Harry Liek chuckled. "'Watch your step' is the word," he advised.

Erling and I roped up in the morning sun and unslung our axes. We chopped steps in the ice almost up to the top of the ridge, where it became a large snow dome; there we hit a road block—a stretch of hard, shining ice. It was at least a hundred yards long and very steep. It was not only dangerous, it would take a long time to cut through.

"We've already cut enough steps to make a staircase to the moon," I muttered. "Let's try to find a way around this pesky ice."

"Sure. We'll try a traverse."

So we began hacking steps almost horizontally along the side of

the ridge. This worked fine for a while, though we weren't gaining much altitude; then we hit another of those gleaming, deadly ice patches. We could hack our way across it, of course; but it wouldn't be safe as a trail. In fact, it would be too perilous even to consider for relaying packloads of supplies. The slope was so steep that one misstep, or an extra strong gust of wind, without something to steady us, and we'd all go barreling down that ice without a hope of stopping.

Erling was studying a steep rock chimney that rose from where our steps ended. I followed his gaze.

"I've been carrying an extra length of rope, for use in emergencies," I remarked grimly. "And this is it." We thereupon climbed the chimney to a place where we could tie the rope to an outthrust of rock. We then chopped our way across the ice, hitched to this rope; and at the far end we cut a groove in the ice at right angles to the trail, laid the rope in the groove and tied a sack full of ice to the end of the rope to hold it taut. We now had what any hospitable mountain would have offered gratis; a railing to hold onto as we packed over Denali's icy chute.

The mountain paid us back, next day, for tampering with its arrangements; a storm came down and kept us immobilized, tented in and crowded around our stove. Incidentally, there is nothing more satisfying to a stormed-in mountain climber than the warm hearth song inside your tent of one of those whirring little gasoline burners.

When the storm let up, twenty-four hours later, our steps were full of snow. We shovelled them out, and all four of us began relaying loads of grub up to the beginning of our rope railing. Harry and Al made this back-and-forth trip several times, while Erling and I crossed the ice and cut more steps, as far as the foot of the snow dome capping the ridge. "Dome, hell," I grumbled. "Why, it's practically straight up."

"It'll be our steepest yet, that's certain. Any steeper and we'd fall over backwards."

Either Harry or Al had put a sack of oatmeal partly on Erling's packsack at the lower end of the rope railing. When we got back and Erling picked up his pack, the sack of oatmeal rolled off and started down the slope. We both grabbed for it, but it got away and headed at forty miles an hour for Traleika Glacier, two thousand

feet down. The little sack looked so funny, flipping over and over like a midget acrobat, that I burst out laughing. Erling had a different idea; he looked at me and remarked tartly, "What the hell you laughing at? That might have been one of us!"

In the morning we relayed supplies across the ice path to the foot of the dome, then Al Lindley and I cut steps to the top which was a quarter of a mile of almost straight-up chopping, belaying, and chopping again. Once up, we were rewarded with a wonderful view; almost half a mile of clear travelling with no steps to cut!

Of course, it really was a good view, up there on top of Karstens Ridge; in the distance was the shining elevation of North Peak; on our left the big tower of rock named Browne Tower after Belmore Browne; ahead, leading onto Harper Glacier at 15,000 feet, was Parker Pass, named after Browne's partner Herschel Parker.

Personally, I don't hold with naming places after people. Places have a personality of their own, and are entitled to be named after it, as the Indians always do; only rarely does the personality of the place fit the personality of the man it's named after. Denali, or Home-of-the-Sun, is a far more fitting name than McKinley; and Straightaway Glacier, on the northwest side of the mountain, has a far more exciting ring to it than the steeper Peters Glacier on the northeast.

Of course places have to have names, good or bad; otherwise I couldn't tell you that next day we broke up Camp Four and relayed all our stuff up to the middle of Parker Pass. As always, at a new camp, we got out field glasses and inspected the road ahead.

"Looks to be badly cut up with seracs," Al remarked, and passed the glasses to me.

"Yes. But not many bad crevasses. Easier than chopping steps, anyway."

Camp Five didn't last long. At four o'clock next morning, out there in the middle of the pass, we woke up to a wind so fierce we thought the tents were going to blow away.

We stood it as long as we could, but when one tent pole cracked Erling and Al went out in the dawn, heading up onto the glacier to hunt a more sheltered camp site. Harry and I scrambled to pack up Camp Five under the collapsing canvas.

In thirty minutes they were back. "Come on," said Al, "we've

staked out a wonderful spot. In the lee of a great big block of ice. No wind!" The promise of "no wind" seemed highly improbable, when we found we couldn't even stand up against the gale in the pass, and had to crawl along on hands and knees.

Camp Six was as good as Camp Five was terrible; it was not only sheltered by the ice block, when things cleared up we could see that it had a view over Harper Ice Fall and straight down the road we had come up—Muldrow Glacier. Next morning we could see two men sitting by a tent 4,000 feet below, near where we had cached the Carpe cosmic ray party's supplies. As we watched, a plane flew over the cosmic ray camp, dropped supplies, and then was off down the Muldrow flight-route, flying at between twelve and thirteen thousand feet. "And here *I* am," I thought, exulting, "well above fifteen thousand—looking down on an airplane!" Just so I wouldn't feel too good about how far I had come up in the world, I turned around and looked the other way to the top of Denali above me.

We had spotted the place where Archdeacon Stuck had cached his minimum-recording thermometer, nineteen years before. Now we hiked over to it. It was tucked in the rocks at the foot of Browne Tower, just as Harry Karstens had said, with several rocks piled on the box holding the thermometer; there was also a tube containing a record of the trip. We opened the box and saw that the needle of the thermometer was pushed down into the bulb as far as the instrument would register—ninety-five below zero. It had probably been colder, but the instrument couldn't record it. Anyway, —95°F. was the coldest ever recorded in North America. I tucked the thermometer inside my parka. It was later taken to Washington, D.C., officially tested and found to be in perfect order.

The route to the top was glacier-going again. The snow had drifted hard and firm, and wasn't so steep we had to cut steps, but now we had a new enemy to face—altitude. When we started up from Camp Six with the usual forty-pound packs on our backs, we found we could only take a few steps before having to rest. And you don't sit down; you stand up and lean on your ice axe. When you sit down, it's too much work getting back up. It is a strange feeling, altitude fatigue—as if your leg muscles are in revolt and your lungs are on half duty.

At 16,000 feet a snowstorm came up. We struggled along: 100

steps, rest; 100 steps, rest. At sixteen thousand five hundred the wind got to blowing so hard we cached our loads and headed back down.

Funny thing about altitude: as soon as we turned around and started back to camp we had no more trouble breathing, and our leg muscles began to behave themselves.

Back in our tents, Al began to speculate. "From the point we reached before the wind hit us," he said, "South Peak didn't look too difficult. One good day, from there, and we ought to be on top."

"You bet!" It was an exciting thought. We had been climbing for twenty-three days. Now the summit was in reach.

"Let's play it safe," Erling suggested. "Set up our last camp at 17,000 feet, five hundred above where we reached today."

I agreed. "That ought to make it a sure thing, if anything's sure up here."

We were eager to get going, but storms kept us holed up at Camp Six for two days. This was probably a good turn Denali did us; whether we wanted to or not, we were resting, and getting used to the altitude.

On May 6th it cleared, and we were able to move our whole outfit up the glacier to 17,000. We picked a camp site on a slight slope; to level it we merely had to pick the ice loose on the high side. This doesn't sound like much of a chore; but at that altitude we found we could only work for a few minutes before getting completely out of breath. It took us three hours to set up that camp—a job we had done in an hour farther down.

But we were set now, set to do something that had never been done before: climb both peaks of McKinley. We had food enough to last for ten days, if blizzards struck; fuel enough, too—and we might need every drop of it, because up there at 17,000 feet the cold was brutal. The moment the sun dropped below the mountain, which it did at 4 p.m., the thermometer followed it down, to 25 below; and there it stayed until about ten the next morning.

Next day was clear. We decided not to wait until the temperature got up for the day; at 9 a.m. we headed for the summit. We left our skis stuck in the snow like sentinels alongside the tents. The snow-surface was hard and crusty; it made walking easier than skiing, (Erling had said, the night before, "We've already skied at 17,000 feet, higher than it's ever been done before. I'm satisfied.")

The summit dome of McKinley is a horseshoe, with the open end to the east, the way we were coming. We roped up and made a steep, slow traverse off the glacier to get on a top of the northeast ridge—a continuation of Karstens Ridge—that leads up to the horseshoe. On the ridge, the going was easy, except for a cold, miserable wind and, of course, the altitude, which made our progress a panting, plodding, stop-and-go affair. We finally struggled over some rocks and got onto a fairly level plateau at the bottom of the summit dome.

Here we stopped for a real, sit-down rest. When I got my breath back I said, "Browne and Parker left a thermometer somewhere around here, when the storm drove them off the mountain in 1912. Wonder if we could find it?"

Al Lindley gave me a half-frozen smile. "Me, I'm going to save my energy to plant our own souvenirs—on top."

From where we sat there appeared to be an easy route up the inside of the horseshoe. But I was almost certain the Stuck-Karstens party had gone up the west arm; so we started out in that direction. We soon found out the traverse to the west was not only difficult and dangerous, it required considerable step-cutting on the ice. At that altitude, we would have been at it all day. We retraced our steps in a kind of numb disgust, and began climbing up the inside of the horseshoe.

The wind turned on stronger, and colder. We had on wind-proof pants, but we still couldn't stop for long. At nineteen thousand feet I noticed no difference in my breathing from seventeen thousand; I simply never had enough air, and I had a dull feeling I never would get enough again.

Strangely, the nearer we got to the top the less we stopped to rest. Perhaps it was knowing we didn't have much farther to go; but I think it was also that we were so physically miserable, whether we were moving or not, that we all felt we might as well keep lifting our feet up that wretched white slope, and get it over with.

When we got on top of the horseshoe we followed the curving ridge to a little mound at the south end; from there we could look down on all the other peaks in sight.

This was the top of the continent.

We looked at each other and grinned feebly. I guess none of us quite believed it, at first. 20,320 feet!

It was much too cold to yell. Our thermometer said thirty-five below zero. But I think we all felt warm inside, standing there on the wind-packed snow. We had made it.

I suppose only a mountain climber really knows about these things. When you finally get to the top of some towering peak, well, there's a special sense of elation and excitement, a fine, free feeling that you and your companions standing there with you are the most important people in the world.

The view was stupendous. A hundred thousand square miles of Alaska lay below us. It was sharply, beautifully clear; only the horizon was hazy. To the south, the blue-green flatlands of the Susitna River reached down to the ocean at Cook Inlet, a hundred miles away; to the north, we caught the gleam of the Yukon winding through its broad, flat tundra; westward, a rock cliff fell away dizzily for ten thousand feet, then the granite rose again to 17,000-foot Mt. Foraker—Denali's Wife of Indian legend.

In spite of the biting cold we stayed up there on top of the world for thirty minutes, taking picture after picture after picture. We had two still and one movie cameras with us. But it was impossible to keep mittens off for more than a few seconds, to make adjustments. (We found out later that we had bungled every shot. It was so cold the shutters were slow in releasing; all the film was over-exposed.)

After I'd used up my film I wandered away from the rest, back along the horseshoe ridge. I wanted to be alone for part of those thirty minutes, to savor them—thirty minutes of triumph after years of dreaming that went back to a boy sitting on a stump reading exciting tales of Alaska; that covered months of planning and weeks of back-breaking toil up the long white slopes I was now looking down upon.

I glanced over my shoulder and saw the others getting ready to follow me. "I might as well lead the way," I thought. I spotted what looked like a more promising route back, following the other arm of the horseshoe down onto the head of Harper Glacier.

Someone yelled, "Hey, Grant, come back and sign the book!"

We had carried up a brass tube and a notebook to fit inside it, in which we were going to write our names and the date, then stash it in the highest rocks.

I yelled back, "Oh, you know my name as well as I do. You sign for me!"

I watched them cache the tube in some bare rocks 500 feet below the summit; then I went on down the horseshoe ridge, unwilling as yet to give up the beautiful privacy of my communion with the mountain-top and the great land below.

We hadn't planned to rope up, going back, until the trail got steep. I didn't realize that a mountain can be steeper going down than it is going up.

14



The Mountain Sets a Trap

I WAS CROSSING A STRIP OF ICE, thinking about how good it was going to be to get back to our warm tents at Camp Seven, when my right-foot crampon got snagged in my windproof pants. In a flash I was sliding down McKinley on my back, gaining momentum every second.

I tobogganed this way for two hundred yards, then managed to roll over on my side. My ice axe was tied to my wrist by a leather strap. I knew if I didn't get myself stopped, I was likely to have a cliff a quarter mile below named after me. I slung the point of my axe into the snow with all my strength, and used it as a brake; I had almost got myself stopped when the axe hit a piece of ice, described an arc and came down on my other wrist, cutting a deep gash. I pulled the point out and slammed it into the snow again. This was no time to worry about trifles. Finally the slope eased off a bit. I stopped.

This is how my abrupt loss of altitude looked to my fellow climbers. As Erling tells it, "When we noticed that Grant was out of sight we wondered how he had got so far ahead. Finally we saw him, far down and off to the side of the ridge, waving his arms frantically. I guess he was yelling [I was], but we couldn't hear him.

"We roped up and went down the slope to him, picking up his camera, mittens and badly torn cap on the way. When we got to him I took one look and said, 'My God, Grant, you're an awful sight!'"

I was, too. I had torn my ear, cut my cheek, and got a bruising gash over one eye, which was already swelling shut. Blood had frozen around my other eye, cutting down vision. My ears were getting badly frost-bitten. Fortunately Erling had a spare stocking cap in his pack. (That guy thought of everything.)

I was mighty glad to be back with the gang, and after that stuck close to them. In fact, I had to. I had only one eye to see out of, and at 19,000 feet the wind got stronger and began to throw biting snow flakes into my face. It was all I could do to see along the rope to the two dark-gray legs of Erling Strom, going down-slope ahead of me.

Watching Erling's moving shape out of my one good eye, I had time to do some serious thinking. I had been given, by bloody experience, an example of the truth of the maxim that a mountain is never climbed until you are safely down it. And for descending climbers, a mountain sets an ingenious trap.

There are two working parts to this trap: first, unless you back down, a steep slope is more dangerous going down than going up; and second, after you've made the top, you have a feeling that all the hard part is over. This is the siren lure that leads to that one careless step. "From now on," I told myself, "I'm going to be on the alert for every one of Denali's tricks." I stuck to that resolve—for about as long as most people stick to a New Year's resolution.

The trail we had picked down to Camp Seven, following Harry Karstens' route, was far easier than the way up. There was still plenty of daylight when we arrived at 9 o'clock that night—and never was home more welcome than the sight of those two dark, pointed tent-shapes against the snow. We piled in, lit the stove, put some rum in a pot to heat up, then took stock of our injuries. Of course I was far ahead of the rest. In addition to my cut face, I had frozen my ears, and now they ached like fury. Erling had frozen his fingers, Harry Liek had frozen both toes and fingers, Al had frozen feet.

"Wait a minute," I said, rolling up my sleeve, "I forgot something."

It was a nasty gash, all right, that hole in my wrist. Al looked at it and said, "So that's why there was blood on your ice axe. Grant, why didn't you say something?"

"I did, remember? I said, 'Let's head for camp.' Hey, I think our rum's about hot enough."

That hot rum in tin cups, drunk by four frozen, shaggy-bearded and exhausted climbers, was about the finest toast to success I've ever come across.

Afterward, the boys helped me doctor my various cuts, and then someone said, "Dinner?"

The word was greeted with complete silence. "Where's ^{my} sleeping bag?" Harry asked, and that was that. The four conquerors of McKinley were pooped out, and wanted nothing but sleep.

Of course, we had another conquest on our agenda. Standing on McKinley's summit and sighting across at North Peak, we had planned to scale it the next day. But when that next day came, clear and thirty-five below, we had all slept late, and I think everyone was relieved when I said, "How about staying in camp today? I could use twenty-four hours to kind of grow together."

I still had only one good eye to see out of, but I could see plenty well enough to help cook and then surround a big breakfast. Except for taking a few pictures (which at 35 below came out as disastrously as the ones the day before), we devoted ourselves singlemindedly to the job of resting.

"If a blizzard hits us tomorrow we may be sorry," said Al, finding something to worry about.

"We have grub for seven days right here," I remarked, between bites on hardtack. "Besides, who says it's going to storm?"

Next day was not only clear, it had miraculously turned warm—ten above zero. We started out full of vigor and enthusiasm. "This is the way it ought to be," I said. "Keep an eye out for spring flowers."

Harry Liek chuckled. "Never mind the flowers. Just keep an eye out."

Tramping up the glacier we found that the sun was actually beating down hot; we stopped often, sweating and leaning on our ice axes. "At least," Al panted, "we can blame the sun for part of it, but Ol' Devil Altitude is in there against us, too." We trudged slowly up to the head of Harper Glacier, 18,000 feet, then swung right and followed the steep, rocky ridge that led to the top of North Peak.

We had been travelling on packed snow. Now, for about two miles, we hit slippery, ice-coated rocks that extended up to within 600 feet of the top. The going was snail-slow. We chopped and belayed our way, making about a quarter of a mile an hour. It was hard work, and it was drudgery, for me, anyway. There was no great inspiration to sustain us. After all, we had climbed the main peak. It wasn't until 6 o'clock that we stood on the packed snow at the summit.

Almost at our feet, facing north, there was a sheer drop of 10,000

feet. Far below lay Wonder Lake and the Kantishna; with my field glasses I thought I could even see the cabin I had built at Big Timber, and right then, for the first time on this North Peak climb, I felt that mountaineer's special sense of excitement and achievement. This was that white dome against the blue I had stood entranced with, six years before, when I had first seen it.

We had intended to try to locate some sign of the fabulous flagpole the sourdoughs had carried up to the last rocks on North Peak in 1910. "Perhaps we'll find a busted piece of the pole itself," I said, "or at least a piece of the rope they used to guy it, still lashed to a rock."

But a storm wind began to howl down on us just after we started back; it was a long way to the last rocks where the pole might be, and we had lined out a different route back, avoiding rocks and sticking as much as possible to crusted snow. We left those relics of the expedition that started in McPhee's saloon for the next climbers. So far as I know no one has ever found them.

The blizzard had hit by the time we got back to Camp Seven at 8:30. We couldn't start our descent of the mountain until the storm lifted, which it did at two the next afternoon. Then we abandoned all the stuff we didn't need—that seven days' supply we had back-packed up as blizzard insurance, as well as a tent, a gasoline stove and a half-full bottle of rum. We were doing no relaying, going down, and packs had to be as light as possible.

Al Lindley held up his sealskin parka. "Worth ninety-five bucks. Weight, ten pounds. Anybody can have it who wants to lug it down." I looked at it covetously out of my good eye. We all wanted it, but our packs already weighed ninety-five pounds.

It took us two hours to reach our cache at Parker Pass, where we had left some food and fuel. When we got there the wind was still strong and it was beginning to snow. "We got blown out of here once," Al said. "Let's go on down to our 12,000 foot camp on the ridge."

We considered this carefully. Finally I said, "At this time of year there are only about two hours of darkness. We ought to be able to see well enough to negotiate that ridge. Let's go."

But it took us all night to get down to Camp Four. We had to cut new steps down the steep places, and that meant shucking our packs while we cut the trail, then climbing back for them. Neverthe-

less, when we got to our camp, at 4 a.m., we were all anxious to get down off the ridge onto Muldrow.

That is a strange thing about mountain climbing. When you once start back you are just as eager to get down as you were to go up.

The trail off Karstens Ridge to our camp at the head of Muldrow was well packed, apparently recently travelled by the cosmic ray people, and we got down by 5 a.m. There we came on a mystery.

We had spotted the two tents that Carpe and another man had set up near our cache. When I got close I let out a good loud "Hel-l-lo-o!" to wake them. No answer. When I walked up to the tents I saw the flaps were tied from the outside. I untied them and looked in.

Both bedrolls and packsacks were there. You don't leave either when you're going to be away overnight. It looked queer. Perhaps something had happened to them on the ridge; but we had seen no sign that anyone had slipped off the trail.

Al got to the tents right after me, and we both started looking for tracks leading away. It had snowed just enough during the night so we couldn't tell.

We all had a feeling that something was wrong; but at this point we just naturally had to set up a tent and cook a meal . . . we suddenly realized that it had been more than 18 hours since we'd eaten a bite. While Harry was cooking bannocks and bacon, Erling and I went in the cosmic ray tents to search for clues. We came across two diaries. One was Allen Carpe's. The other belonged to Theodore Koven, an assistant.

"This one of Carpe's," I said, "reads as if more men were coming up to join them."

"Then maybe they went back down the glacier to meet the people coming up."

"But they haven't come back. And they left their sleeping bags behind."

After our meal Harry and I went back to the bottom of the ridge, to see if Carpe and Koven had tried a new way up it, away from our trail.

No tracks. That meant, we'd simply have to keep an eye out for them as we went down-mountain. We put on our skis, roped together thirty feet apart and started down the glacier. Erling was in

the lead, I was next, then Harry; Al was last man. That line-up put an expert skier in front and an expert at the rear.

It was a delightful ski run, to me. The snow was hard underneath with about an inch of new powder on top; there was just sufficient grade for me to handle. Each of us, after Erling, kept the rope taut and away from our ski tips. We skied along happily at about ten miles an hour.

When we had gone about a mile we noticed a man's tracks. He had been walking up the glacier, then turned and started down. These tracks were not in a straight line; they wobbled as though the hiker couldn't tell where he was going. The new snow in the tracks did not appear to be drifted; apparently he hadn't been travelling in a storm.

We followed the tracks for almost another mile. Then Erling pointed with his ski pole. "What's that black thing over there?" The dark blob on the snow was about twenty-five feet to one side of our route.

One look was enough. We had found a dead man. We rolled the body over and Al Lindley, who knew Carpe, said it wasn't he. The man was without cap or mittens, there was a torn place in his pants leg, and an injury on his hip.

Here before our eyes was pitiful evidence of what the mountain could do. This man had died alone, there on the mountain, frozen to death. If it had been Koven, he had probably died trying to get back to his camp.

I think we were all too stunned to react much, except to wonder, "Who is he? How did it happen?" Finally Harry said, "We can't just leave him here, poor fellow. And we can't carry him all the way out. Let's haul him, whoever he is, down to where the glacier is smooth enough for a plane. Then his friends can send in for him." Erling and Al, as the best skiers, said they'd go back up to Camp Three and get the Yukon sled out of our cache; also two pairs of snowshoes for Harry and me—we were not expert enough to check our speed on skis to the slow pace the sled would take. When Erling and Al got back we loaded the dead man on the sled, together with a tent, some grub out of our packs and the two extra pairs of skis; then we started slowly down the glacier.

We had only one safety rope and now it had to serve for hauling,

too. Erling and Al went ahead, roped together but forty feet apart, so if one of the two fell into a hidden crevasse the other could brace himself and stop the falling man's plunge. There was not enough rope to pass over the sled and hook on to Harry and me; we followed behind, unroped.

"Never mind," I remarked casually, "any snow bridges that will hold you skiers and that sled will be safe enough for us." I believed it, too.

I was snowshoeing along about fifty feet back of the sled, with Harry right behind me when, without warning, the snow fell away under my snowshoes. I plunged into sudden darkness.

I had time to let out a feeble shout. Then, for a couple of long, long seconds I plummeted downward. I remember thinking "This is it, fellow!" Then my pack scraped against the side of the crevasse, my head banged hard against the ice wall and I came to a jarring stop.

When my head cleared and I could look around in the blue darkness, I saw I was on a plug of snow wedged between the ice walls. On either side, this wedge of snow fell away into sheer blackness.

About forty feet above I could see a ray of yellow sunlight, slanting through the hole I had made in the surface crust. The crevasse was about twelve feet wide way up there; it narrowed to two feet down where I was. Below was icy death.

Far off, I heard Erling Strom shouting, "Grant? Are you hurt? Where are you?"

I yelled back at the top of my lungs, "I'm okay. Quit asking questions and drop a rope down that hole!"

While I was waiting I took a survey of my situation. My snowshoes were smashed and my pack was lying at my feet, ripped off my back. But those pieces of equipment had broken my fall—probably saved me from becoming a smashed-up corpse.

I didn't move any more than was necessary. Cautiously I reached down, grabbed the crampons tied on the outside of my pack, and strapped them on. Then I jammed my feet into the side wall of the crevasse. I didn't trust that snow plug for two cents. Still working cautiously, I unslung my ice axe, chopped foot holes in the ice wall and stood in them, bracing my back against the opposite wall. Then I stared upward at the tiny streak of sunlight.

Finally the rope came dangling down. I had sense enough to send my pack up first, with its sleeping bag and other precious defenses against the mountain; and when the rope came down again I tied a loop in it, got inside, and signalled the three up there in daylight to haul away.

I moved about six inches, and stopped. A hundred and eighty pounds of human was too much—not for the rope pullers but for the snow at the crevasse lip. The rope simply cut into the snow and caught in a bind.

I yelled up, "You guys just hang on. I'll come up hand over hand," which I did, with the crampons helping; but at the top the crevasse lip rounded out, and when my feet hit the softer snow I kept sliding back. I was close to safety, yet I could sense that yawning hole waiting behind me. Al yelled, "Here. Tie on the free end of the rope!" and threw it at me. I grabbed it and tied it under my arms with one hand, holding on with the other. Then Al, Erling and Harry gave a hard pull. I flopped out on that open, blessed glacier-top like a fish yanked ashore.

Injuries sustained while I was exploring that deadly cold-storage locker: a hole chewed through my lip, more skin scraped off my face, assorted bruises. I was lucky.

After my friends had made sure that nothing serious had happened to me, beyond getting the fright of my life, Al said, "No more of this. We leave that dead fellow here and go roped up."

We wrapped the body in our tent, shovelled some snow over it and set the 8-foot Yukon sled on end as a marker. Then we set out in our regular skiing order—Erling first on the safety rope, me next, then Harry, Al last. We had skied about half a mile down-glacier, when we came upon mute and shocking testimony of what had happened to those two men who had camped at the head of Muldrow to study cosmic rays.

At the edge of a crevasse lay an ice axe and a pair of crampons. Faint ski tracks told us that the man who was ahead had passed over the crevasse safely on the snow crust, that the man behind had fallen through, and that the man ahead had come back to help him out. The tracks showed that the skier ahead had sidestepped carefully up to the edge—and there the snow had caved in and hurled him into the crevasse. We couldn't tell, of course, whether it was Allen Carpe or Theodore Koven who had broken through first. But

we knew now that it was Koven who had got himself out and had started back to his camp, perhaps to get a rope to throw to his friend. Being badly hurt, he had fallen exhausted, and frozen.

The story was plainly written in the snow—a stark tragedy of two men, supposedly experienced mountaineers, betrayed by their eagerness to greet their friends. They had gone down the glacier unroped, over a trail they thought they knew, and one of the mountain's oldest traps had sprung shut on them—as it almost had on me.

We stayed at the crevasse for a time, shouting and cautiously peering down. But of course there was no answer. The accident had apparently happened several days before. There was no chance that poor Allen Carpe was alive. I am still haunted by the thought of how Carpe must have felt, if he survived the fall, lying there in the icy darkness slowly freezing to death.

Two miles below that fatal crevasse we found a cache of supplies left by the other members of the Carpe party. Tracks around it were several days old. This was as far as the people going up had come. We were soon to find out why.

This far down the mountain we ran into near-melting temperatures and a fresh fall of snow that made the going tough and hazardous, especially with heavy packs. Before we got out of the crevasse-and-serac area everyone of us had broken through into a crevasse at least once; but because we were all lashed to the safety rope, and kept it taut, none of the falls were serious, though, for my part, they were all terrifying.

Going down the Big Serac was the hardest job, particularly for a greenhorn on skis. Harry and I finally took ours off and walked down. There was another steep serac before we got down to our Camp One site at 7,200 feet; and I don't believe I've ever fallen down so many times in such a short distance. After I had dropped into the crevasse, six hours before, my face had bled steadily. When we got to Camp One I was feeling light-headed and badly in need of a rest.

"Listen, you guys," I said. "From here on there's no more danger of crevasses. You go ahead. I'm going to break out my bedroll and get some sleep. I'll catch up with you at the Cache Creek camp."

"Nothing doing," said Al. "We're not going to let you go wandering around alone. We stick together."

"We could all use a half-hour's rest," said Harry, and sat down in the snow.

During that half hour, my bleeding stopped and I picked up strength rapidly. "Altitude working in reverse," I thought. Nevertheless, in that soft snow we had to rest every hundred yards all the way to McGonagall Pass. It had gotten dark again. We had been travelling steadily for more than thirty-six hours. We followed the cosmic ray party's well-packed ski trail to the top of the pass, and almost ran into their tent.

"Anyone in there?" Harry called. A voice answered, and a flashlight turned on inside. Then there was a fumbling at the tent flaps and a man poked his head out.

"If you're part of the cosmic ray party," Erling said, "We've got some unpleasant news for you."

"More bad news!" The man seemed to be in a state of depression already. He said, as we went in, that his name was Percy Olten, and introduced another, older man, E. P. Beckwith, who lay in his sleeping bag. Beckwith, we learned, was seriously ill and Olten was taking care of him. Squatting there in the tent, with the flashlight lying on the floor throwing a cold beam, it was a tough job to tell those two, trapped by illness, what had happened to their two partners. When we had finished Olten thought a moment, then said slowly, "I guess this ends our expedition. There's another member of our outfit, Nicholas Spadavecchia, who's gone back down the mountain to get to a phone—he'll call Fairbanks for a plane to come get Beckwith to a hospital."

"Does he know the way?"

"He's got a map. Alaska Road Commission."

I shook my head. "It's very inaccurate, beyond the end of the road."

"Oh. Well, I guess Spadavecchia's a good outdoors man." It turned out that Spadavecchia, a newcomer to McKinley, had got completely and hopelessly lost, and had finally followed his own footsteps back to the McGonagall Pass tent, by then abandoned. John Rumohr and Lee Swisher rescued him there, after a 180-mile snowshoe hike. Never had an expedition been dogged by such tragic bad luck. The only good part came when our party reached the park phone and called Alaska Airlines at Fairbanks—which resulted in Jerry Jones' famous rescue flight that I told about in Chapter 8, to Muldrow and return from Fairbanks' mud-pie landing field.

We left Olten and Beckwith at daylight, hating to go but knowing

we could do them no good. The snow was crusted hard at the top of the pass. Harry took a look at the steep slope and said, "I'm going to sit down on my poles going down this. Use 'em as brakes." Erling snorted. "No respectable skier would *ever* do that."

He took off, and immediately hit a terrible skiing condition—ice on top of the snow.

He didn't sit on his poles. He unslung his ice axe and sat on that. I bellowed, "Erling! No respectable skier would ever do that!" I don't think he heard me—at least he never admitted he did.

The less said about how I got down the better. Anyway, my face didn't start bleeding. Finally, at 6 o'clock on the morning of May 12, we topped a little rise and saw the tent tucked in the snow. It was Cache Creek base camp. During the 39 hours since we had left Camp Seven, up at 17,000 feet, we had eaten one meal and had had no sleep—only a half-hour's rest. We were a tired and hard-looking bunch.

Al practically fell into the tent and went to sleep at once. Harry, who had fallen behind, came in a little later and did the same, without even breaking out his bedroll. I had another idea. "Let's eat," I said. Erling glanced at me and grinned. "I'm with you."

There was plenty of fancy-looking food around that camp. We settled on oyster soup, canned chicken, spinach, biscuits and cocoa. When the big feed was ready we waked up the other two.

I think it took us all a while to realize that we had made it, up and back down again, safely. Now it was over, although as I slept that day I had nightmare after nightmare in which I was falling down that Muldrow crevasse. Erling had to shake me awake to bring me out of it. And later on, in August, I found myself leading a party up to the head of Muldrow again, to bring out the cosmic ray records and to sled out the frozen body of Theodore Koven.

But I think we all realized, there in the tent on Cache Creek, that this was the quiet closing chord of a great swelling symphony of comradeship, of thundering avalanches, of dancing, feathery snow in the stinging wind; of the deep, singing blue of the sky against the white summit, of the morning music of a crimson, coral and saffron sunrise in the high altitudes, and of the screaming, ice-blue terror of a glacier crevasse.

Later on, patrolling the park, I'd come suddenly around a turn and there through the trees would be that snow-capped peak brush-

ing against the sky. I'd think, "You're a mighty mountain, Denali, but I've been on top of you, with all the world at my feet." And I'd lift my head a bit higher, more confident of myself for whatever was to come.

(*Note:* For a complete listing of all McKinley climbs and attempted climbs up to 1961, see Appendix.)



Big-City Girl

OUR CLIMB MADE THE *New York Times* with a front page banner headline: "LINDLEY EXPEDITION SCALES MCKINLEY . . . Both Peaks Climbed"; and, partly thanks to this publicity, more tourists began coming to McKinley, though they were a trickle compared to the yearly invasion of parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone. But with the country fighting its way out of the depths of the Depression, every summer more and more Americans made this 1,800 mile water-and-railroad trek north to see the continent's highest mountain. Harry Liek was on the alert for this; he put up new buildings at headquarters and improved the road, the trails and the tourist accommodations at Savage River. One of his biggest improvements, in my opinion, was to put through a substantial raise in my salary.

In the spring of 1937 I had a ten weeks' leave due me, and decided to become a tourist myself. "I want to take a rubber at the Ice Carnival at Fairbanks," I told Harry, "and then I want to go down to San Francisco. There I want to get a boat that will take me through the Panama Canal. I'll see Havana, and I'll see New York. Maybe Chicago, too."

"You're leaving out Australia," Harry said, with that quiet chuckle of his, "but it's a nice little jaunt. Beware of poor but honest girls, and gamblers out to rob a rich ranger."

"Fat chance!"

Next day, in the milling crowds stomping around the packed-snow streets of Fairbanks, I ran across my old sourdough crony, Diamond Willow Holmes. He was heading, as I was, for the finish of the 100-mile dog team race.

"Grant!" He stuck out his hand and grinned under his gray han-

dlebar mustache. "I saw by the papers you made it, boy. Didn't think you would."

"Made it? Oh—McKinley. Why, it was easy, Diamond Willow. Nothing to it. I only died twice."

Diamond Willow glanced shrewdly at me. "Hmmm. Now you even talk like an Alaskan."

Maybe it was awareness of this habit of speech I'd fallen into that made me feel later on, steaming south on the S.S. *California* from San Francisco, that I was somewhat different from the other passengers. When people, and particular girls, learned that I was from Alaska, that I was a ranger ("Ooh, a real *Ranger!*"), and that I'd climbed McKinley, they looked at me with a kind of fascination; I found myself a popular fellow on the sun deck, and did my best to entertain the young things with stories of Alaska and the park.

One time, sitting in my deck chair talking to a good-looking red-haired girl named Ida, I had a recurrence of a most unpleasant feeling. I was watching the sunlight dancing on the warm, blue Pacific, and talking about cold days in Alaska. "And so," I was saying, "even though Mike, my team leader, had headed back to his dog house that cold morning, I pulled him out again and we got going, following the packed-snow trail of a train of caterpillar tractors hauling ore. When I came up to the cat train's wanigan—that's the grub shack—I saw a thermometer by the door. I read it. It said 72 degrees below zero. Right then I began to feel a little chill coming on."

"Grant, you're perfectly amazing!" I saw the usual fascinated interest in Ida's blue eyes, but I got the sensation that it was not fascination with me as a man and an interesting guy, but as some kind of freak. It was the same feeling I'd had when I was dressed up in my ranger uniform and talking to girls touring the park; all of a sudden I'd notice they were looking at my uniform—not at me. I felt I hadn't really gotten close to them, as one human being to another.

Of course, in my blue-denim working clothes I looked like what I was—a hard-working and often unshaven gent, who certainly did not fit their picture of a Lancelot of the Last Frontier.

But I was hurt and bewildered by this invisible barrier these girls seemed to set up; and so I finally closed the doors of my mind on them, no matter how attractive.

Now, on this white, clean and delightful tourist steamer, the doors of my mind closed even tighter. Perhaps that is what made them so ready to swing open later. At times on that lazy, luxurious voyage through the Canal, I felt more alone than I ever had in my winter cabin out at Big Timber.

I wandered around New York, and Washington, where I spent a couple of good hours talking shop with Park Service people, then went to visit my mother up at St. Ignace in Michigan. This was a heart-warming time. Mother was her same smiling, interested, understanding self, and she seemed to be really proud of her son Grant. I was still feeling the glow of her affection as I stepped off the train at Seattle to spend a few days visiting friends of my flying school days.

It was the middle of May, and the smell of spring was in the air even downtown. I remembered a girl I had had a few dates with when I was learning to fly, Bea Hunter, a slim, serious, dark-eyed person who had a stationery business of her own in downtown Seattle. I looked her up.

"Grant, how perfectly delightful!" she said when I found her. She leaned her elbows on her stationery counter and looked up at me. "I'll be glad to have dinner with you, but," and she gave me an enigmatic little smile, ". . . I think it will be more of a party for you if we have two other people along, don't you? You'll like them. Especially my girl friend Margaret Wolfe. Such a nice person! She's a widow. The man's name is Arthur Daly. You'll like him, too. How about making it dinner and dancing? There's a spiffy dance band at the New Washington. That sound good?"

"Sure, Bea. Anything you figure out will be okay."

Bea figured things out fine—except maybe the dancing part. I liked Margaret Wolfe on sight. She was a small, trim, blonde girl—woman, rather—with deep gray eyes, a grave smile and a strong handclasp. I noticed when we got to our table in the hotel that Bea seemed pretty much taken up with Arthur Daly, so Margaret and I fell to talking at once. It was easy to talk to her, and there was something warm and pleasant in learning that we had both been born in Minnesota, although Margaret was really a big-city girl, by my standards anyway. She had lived all her life in Minneapolis and in Seattle, except for a year on a Minnesota farm when she was six.

"Hey!" It was Bea, tugging at my sleeve. "Come up for air! How

about ordering Margaret some dinner, Grant? The waiter awaits."

"Oh, sure. That was what we came for. 'Scuse me, Margaret."

I don't remember what we ate—you never do, I guess, at times like this. Margaret told me her folks had come to Seattle in 1918, when she graduated from high school at eighteen. (So she was the same age I was!) Then she said a surprising thing.

"I'm glad I didn't know you when you were learning to fly, Grant."

"Why?"

"Because learning to fly is dangerous, and doing dangerous things when you don't have to seems foolish. I think you were lucky to escape."

"Well, gosh! I guess I came to think that way myself, finally."

Margaret looked up as Bea and Arthur danced past. "Want to dance, Grant? I noticed Bea looking at us strangely."

"Maybe it isn't legal to sit out every dance. Come on." I was never much on a dance floor, except for square dances. A man standing in front of the orchestra was singing loudly about the still of the night and somehow I couldn't get the beat. Dancing with Margaret in that press of couples, I felt as awkward as a bear in a rain-barrel. I was glad when the man and his orchestra stopped.

I told Margaret what Alaska was really like, particularly, for some reason I didn't quite understand myself, about the winters. She listened thoughtfully, then said, with her gray eyes smiling at me, "They wouldn't be any worse than Minnesota winters, would they?"

"No. Sometimes not as bad."

That was the start of it. I had a week before my boat sailed, and I saw Margaret five more times, always in the evenings. She worked daytimes as secretary to the General Motors branch manager. I think I spent *my* days walking up and down the Seattle hills as if they weren't there.

We didn't actually do much. Once we went to a movie with Bea and Arthur, "Seventh Heaven." We walked out on it and went to a Chinese lottery game.

Mostly we went by ourselves, though, usually on walks in the dusk to a Chinese restaurant or a special place for steaks, strolling along Seattle's tree-lined residence streets with roses blooming at the curb, or past the gingerbread mansions of the 1890 lumber barons, many now crumbling, but still looking ghostly and important beside

giant moss-covered tree stumps. We went to a flower market where I bought Margaret some of the huge pansies Seattle grows, and told her they were just ordinary size for Alaska. And everywhere we went we talked—about the flatlands of Minnesota and what they do to you, about how it feels to look at a mountain—about everything in the world and how we felt about it.

My boat sailed on Saturday noon. Margaret was coming to see me off, and I had something important to say to her.

She came at the last minute, bringing Bea with her. "Say, this is great!" I said, feeling flattered and cheated. The whistle blew, and they both reached up and kissed me. I felt cheated again; I didn't like having my good-bye kiss to Margaret just part of a mass farewell by Seattle girls.

I turned to Margaret. "I'll write to you."

She looked at me gravely, but I thought I saw a twinkle in her gray eyes. "Yes, Grant. Please do."

The next day, sailing up the long Inside Passage, I began composing the first of sixty-two letters stretching over a period of fourteen months—all addressed to the blonde girl in Seattle who had looked at me with a smile in her eyes. Only sixty-two, because the mail boat left Seward for Seattle only once a week; but it wasn't until the third week's letter that I got up the courage to ask Margaret to marry me. I got back sixty-two replies; and the sixty-first one, in August of the next year, said, "Yes, Grant, I know now I'll be deeply pleased to come up and be your wife, and help you make a success of your work."

I was helping build a big five-room cabin at headquarters. I let out a yell and almost fell off the roof. John Rumohr looked up and grinned.

"I bet I know what's in that letter."

I said, "John, want to know the smartest thing I ever did in this park? It was to put in a bid for one of these two cabins we're building for married rangers!"

Seward in 1938 was a lively little town, the busy terminus for steamships and the Alaska Railroad. There was always a crowd around when the Seattle steamer nudged up to the pier, and on the nineteenth of September I was in the front of the crowd, waving frantically at all the people lining the steamer rail. At last I spotted

a trim figure in a blue travelling suit, blonde hair under a little blue hat; she was waving back just as frantically. It took forever for the crew to get the gangplank down, but when they did and Margaret came briskly down it, I gathered her in my arms in what I guess must have been a bear hug of considerable vigor.

I let her go after a minute and she looked up at me, eyes sparkling. "My goodness!"

I grinned. "No Bea around this time. Come on, we'll get your things and go over to the railroad station."

I'd made special plans with friends in Anchorage where we were to be married. The plans included a reception, a wedding breakfast, big doings; a four-hour train ride would take us there.

At the railroad station began a comedy of errors I'm sure couldn't have happened to any other bride and groom. The station agent peered gloomily out his window at us. "No train," he said. "Been a washout up in the Kenai. Take four to five days to get her fixed."

"Fine thing to do to a newcomer!" I grumbled. "Well, we'll just have to wait. But, five days! Separate rooms!" I picked up Margaret's bags and we trudged glumly over to the Seward Hotel. I signed the register and was handing the pen to Margaret when she suddenly clutched my arm and drew me away from the desk. "Grant," she whispered, "I came up here to be your wife. Don't people get married in Seward, too?"

"Why, of course! I must be dumb. We can get married right here." The desk clerk told us we could get a license from the U.S. Commissioner; his office was in the next block, one flight up. You don't have to do much walking in a town the size of Seward.

The commissioner was a gray-haired, friendly man. I liked his looks. When he handed us our license he said, "I can marry you, too, if you like."

I looked at Margaret. "It's not the way I planned it, but . . ."

She nodded quickly. "I think it will be fine, don't you?"

So that small, high-windowed office, with its two golden-oak desks and chairs, typewriter and green filing cabinet, became the scene of our wedding. I had the ring, the commissioner read the brief civil service with warmth and understanding, and his secretary was our witness. Then Margaret and I went down the stairs hand in hand.

Outside in the street I saw a plane overhead. It was a four-place

Cessna. "Look!" I practically shouted. "I bet that plane's from Anchorage! We can take it back. We won't have to wait for the darned old train!"

Margaret watched the plane gliding smoothly toward the field at the edge of town. "Why, I suppose we really should, Grant. Your friends would be disappointed if we didn't, wouldn't they?"

Disappointed! Margaret didn't know the half of it. Neither did I.

The flight took only an hour, and at the Anchorage hangar I phoned two of the people who were most in on the plans, George and Dorothy Lingo. Dorothy answered, and when I told her we were already married she said, "Yes, yes, I know you're ready to be married. Now you bring Margaret right on over here."

"But—"

"No, you're not too early. You get a cab and come right over, you hear?"

At the house I finally got things explained. Dorothy, I'd better tell you, was the daughter of Governor Troy of Alaska and kind of used to having social things her own way.

"You *can't* have been married!" she exploded. "Grant, I've made all the arrangements! I've got the minister, the invitations are all out, your friend Carl Lottsfeldt's living room is all over flowers for the wedding and reception, all your friends are coming to my wedding breakfast . . ." She looked hard at me, then at Margaret.

"Grant and Margaret, *you've got to get married again.*"

"Now, Dorothy, fun's fun, but really—"

Margaret leaned forward, "Grant," she said, "maybe it *would* be fun." I could see the sparkle in her eyes.

So doggone if that wasn't just what happened. We got another license and we got married again, by a dignified Episcopal minister in the decked-out living room of Carl Lottsfeldt, an old friend from the days he'd been a clerk at the park. After Dorothy's wedding breakfast next morning, we got on the train for McKinley Park, and I sat in quiet content watching Margaret looking out the window. Once she turned to me and said, "I don't know what I expected to find in Alaska, my dear, but I was prepared to like it. So far, everything has been right. These woods, and the canyon the train's winding through. It's just as it should be. Seward and Anchorage—they reminded me of Minnesota farm towns, though not as bleak. They were right, too."

"Some of Alaska can be pretty barren."

"I know. 'Not girl-country,' you said. And then you added, 'But there are always mountains to look at.' I liked that. And there's a home to be made. A cozy one, I hope."

"Has to be a warm one."

"Of course, silly. I mean more than that. More than a library of good books and phonograph music, too. I mean bringing a full store of resources to it—a store of thoughts and dreams that can be made to come true. Do you see?"

"I think so." My Margaret was bringing much more to Alaska than Alaska could possibly bring to her. She has continued to do it, warmly and graciously, all through the years.

At McKinley ranger quarters John Rumohr had arranged another blow-out for us. Margaret and I were getting to be regular party hounds. Then we moved into a one-room cabin and lived for six weeks in the squeezed-together fashion such a residence demands, while the CCC boys finished off our commodious 3-bedroom quarters. When I took Margaret through it, she said, "Three bedrooms! I know you told me, Grant, but just for the two of us!" I thought she was going to blush. When she didn't, I realized I'd married a woman with far more understanding of frontier necessities than I would expect from a city girl. I felt proud—and lucky.

16



Mob Scene

ONE DAY THAT FALL HARRY LIEK CALLED a meeting of all the park rangers in the new log building that was now headquarters. When the four of us had clumped into his big office, Harry glanced around from under his bushy brows and said, "This winter I'm setting up a new system of ranger patrolling. It will be harder work, but more efficient. And I think you'll like it better. All you rangers will live at headquarters. (Startled looks from all of us.) Every three weeks, on a staggered schedule, you'll make a patrol trip out along the north boundary to Moose Creek, then return through the middle of the park. That's a hike of about two hundred miles. No need to patrol the south boundary. Alaska Range does that. When you get back you'll be at headquarters a week, making short patrols along the east boundary. You'll do a lot of walking. But no one will be stuck out in the park for four months at a stretch and I'll know better what's going on out there. Any questions?"

I guess every one was too stunned by the good news to speak. Finally I said, "No questions, Harry. But—thanks!" Maybe without meaning to, he had solved one of the biggest problems of my newly-wedded life. I had been dreading the day I'd have to kiss Margaret goodbye for two, three or four months and head out on snowshoes for bachelor quarters in a one-room cabin on the Toklat, the McKinley, or some frozen creek. Somehow those cabins didn't look so friendly any more. My few preliminary patrols out in the park had shown me the difference between walking into a dank, lonesome cabin—often with the inside log walls white with frost—and coming home to the warm, welcoming companionship of a wife eager to hear what I had been up to and how I had fared. If

anyone wants to take that as an argument for marriage as an institution I can't, offhand, think of a better one.

I knew that Margaret didn't like living alone even for the two weeks I was to be gone. "But what of it?" she said once, "It's part of your job, Grant, and there shouldn't be any partiality shown a married ranger unless they decide to do what some European countries do: give us a bonus for getting married. Could you arrange that, Grant?"

"It will take a little time," I said, and we both laughed, not because it was so funny, simply because we had found we liked laughing together.

I had always taken my life in short hauls, never projecting what to do about things very far into the future. Now, I began to sense that it was time for the long pull. When I came back from my fifth 200-mile snowshoe excursion in search of poachers and other miscreants, I said, "Margaret, I know this particular ranger job inside out. After all, I've spent thirteen winters and summers prowling around this park. But there's one thing in rangership where I'm completely ignorant. Sometimes I think I'm scared of it. That's handling people. Lots of people all at once, the way they do in parks in the States. Why, all last season there were only six hundred tourists here, and I didn't even see most of 'em. Lou Corbley did."

Margaret poured two cups of coffee from the pot on the stove. "Sounds as if you want to transfer to someplace else. Would that mean you'd have a better job, Grant?"

"No. No more money. Just more work. A lot of rangers would think it was plain silly to apply for a transfer to a harder job at no extra pay."

"Then why do it? You like it here, in what you once called the Big Wilderness. Why go to a place where the crowds are?"

"Because I need the experience."

Margaret looked at me gravely over her coffee cup.

"Then you should do it."

I saw her eyes wander around the cheerful living room she had fixed up, with curtains and pictures and bright chintzes. I said, "Part of the plan I was thinking up, snowshoeing back from the Sanctuary today, was that we'd come back here later. And when we do, it will be for a better job."

Margaret smiled. "You're a deep and devious character, Grant. You never told me that rangers think while they're hiking around." "Doesn't happen often."

I put in to be transferred to Yellowstone, Yosemite or Rainier, in that order—those being the places where the biggest crowds went. While we were waiting to hear what happened when my application form hit Washington and bounced from desk to desk, we talked about my chances, most every evening. Once, looking at Margaret sitting in the kerosene lamplight mending a blouse, I said, "I've been thinking. There's more to it than needing the experience."

Margaret glanced up, smiling. "All this walking around has gone to your head."

"Maybe. But look, Margaret—a lot of Alaskans come up to Alaska because they want to get away from people. It's kind of a retreat, the same thing, I guess, that made a lot of people go out to the early West. I don't think that's why I came up here. But I want to prove it to myself."

"Oh. I think I see. Going where the crowds are is a kind of challenge, like climbing the mountain." Sometimes a woman can analyze a thing right smack to the bottom, in one simple sentence.

My orders came through on May 2, 1939. "Report as a Permanent Ranger at Yosemite National Park Headquarters not later than three days before Memorial Day week-end. Chief Ranger Forrest Townsley will there assign you to holiday crowd duty." I'd made it.

When I arrived in Yosemite on schedule, I found Forrest Townsley filling a wide armchair in a headquarters office . . . a big, stout bear of a ranger, with slightly unkempt hair and a wide smile. He stood up and stuck out a hand. "Glad you're here, Grant! Got just the place for you. You'll like it. Arch Rock entrance gate. I need you there selling entrance permits. It'll be seven a.m. to seven p.m. over the holiday. Make it up to you later." He gave me a broad, friendly grin. (Later I came to mistrust the innocence of that smile of his.)

Yosemite over a holiday was just exactly what I had expected. In one day, looking out the ticket window in the little shack at the Arch Rock gate, I saw more people drive by than had visited McKinley in an entire year. Later, wandering around the Valley floor with Margaret in the twilight, we saw thousands of people all over the place, bustling about at Camp Curry, unloading suitcases from cars at the fancy Ahwanee Hotel, setting up tents in the auto

park, hiking with bedrolls on their backs up the trail back of Half Dome—people everywhere, all busily applying themselves to enjoying the towering cliffs and peaceful valley groves of this spectacular canyon in the Sierra range. Margaret said, "What fun everybody's having! Come on, let's go have fun organizing our new house. I feel like a tourist myself!"

Our quarters were not as many-bedroomed as the cabin at McKinley, and we had no fireplace but we had electric light, and inside plumbing, and an electric range. "Even hot water!" said Margaret. "I've become so much of a pioneer I'd forgotten it could happen."

My past caught up with me after the holidays. Because of my experience in the McKinley outbacks, I was assigned to the Tuolumne Meadows horse patrol, up in the high Sierra away from people. "Be a break for you," said Chief Ranger Townsley, smiling jovially. The job consisted of patrolling more than a hundred miles of trail, in a week and out a week, sometimes leading a pack horse carrying tanks of trout fingerlings to plant in the mountain streams; cleaning up camp sites, hunting for occasional lost people, chopping away down timber on the trail. It wasn't as out-back a job as that at the Kantishna Ranger Station, by a long shot; I saw people every day, hiking along the trail by twos, threes and dozens. I gave out camping and fishing information. Once, back at the Tuolumne Meadows camp, a fisherman gave me some important information in return. He had come in fifteen miles from a lake tucked under the Sierra crest.

"You know you got hundreds of sheep in there?" he asked. "Didn't think sheep were allowed to run in the park."

"They aren't," I said. "Thanks!"

I got together with Carl Danner, the district ranger, and we immediately saddled up, setting out in a hurry for that high lake. When we got there the sheep had gone. But their trail was very plain indeed. I was shocked. Where those woollies had been was a path of destruction that could only be surpassed by a landslide. The grass was eaten down to the roots. Shrubs and small trees were picked clean. The ground was trodden bare. Why, even when thousands of caribou migrated through the McKinley tundra eating reindeer moss as they went, they left no such ruin behind them.

We followed the trail over the crest, and from there we spotted

the herd and the dirty gray tent of the Basque sheepherders, in a pretty little hidden valley in the park. We put our horses down the slope, and came up to two black bearded fellows who eyed us with a kind of dull hostility.

"Who told you to run your sheep in here?" Carl demanded.

One of the Basques shrugged. "No sabe."

Carl looked baffled. I turned my horse away from the two and said to Carl, "Come over here a minute." When Carl came alongside he said, "How do you figure it? Think they really don't savvy English?"

"I think they're trying to give us a run-around."

"How'll we prove it?"

"I've got an idea. Saw it worked once on an Indian dog-breeder. We'll go back over there, and you say to me, 'What do you think we should do?' Then leave it to me."

We went back to the two Basques, and when Carl asked his question I said, "I say we take them both in. We'll find someone who can speak their language, and then we'll find out who owns those sheep."

We tied the two men together and got ready to march them ahead of us when the front Basque turned around and shouted, "You can't do this! Those sheep will scatter all over the country!"

"Now," I said, "you're talking sense—and English. Who owns these sheep?"

"Jones, down at Mono Lake."

"Get 'em out," said Carl. "Get 'em out fast, and tell your boss that we'll be calling on him with some very unpleasant news." *

"We were just going," said the head Basque. "If you'd come a day later we'd have been gone."

The other one grinned and said, "Our sheep broke over the crest, or you'd never have caught us."

We untied the two and herded them and their animals well past the park boundary, at a pace too fast for a sheep to eat. Then we turned our horses and headed back over the twenty-odd miles to Tuolumne Meadows. When we were about a mile from camp and I was plenty saddle-galled, a girl hiker came swinging up the trail with a light pack on her back. She stopped and eyed us.

* The man got off easy—a \$100 fine. The maximum was \$500, plus six months jail.

"You rangers sure have it easy," she said. "Riding around on a horse all day, while the rest of us have to hike it. Pretty soft!"

A ranger is always polite. "I have a soft spot, all right," I said, "but it's not where you think."

Some time later Forrest Townsley called me in to headquarters. "Grant," he said, smiling in his wide, friendly fashion, "you've been doing all right out there. Thought maybe you'd like to get back among people for a spell. I've got one of the finest assignments in the park for you. You'll love it. You're going to go on a three-week outing of the Sierra Club . . . two hundred people and a hundred and twenty-five horses and mules. They all have to obey park rules. You'll be in full charge."

I was appalled. Two hundred people running about through the trees! But I managed to smile right back, and said, "Fine, Chief. I know I have your full support in everything I do." My stout boss looked slightly stumped, but said, "Count on it, boy. Count on it."

The club had set up camp in a mountain meadow in the Hetch Hetchy area. When I got there and saw the costumes the members elected to wear in communing with nature, I was astonished. Women in halters and shorts, men in just shorts; some men and women wearing bright sashes, some wearing wide Mexican hats with feathers stuck in them . . . people all over the meadow, prowling about looking at flowers, watching birds, taking photographs, painting pictures, fishing, wading, swimming with loud yips in the ice cold water, rock climbing on sheer upthrusts . . . I was afraid they would cut more of a swathe through the park than those sheep.

But they didn't. I think it was partly because they were really a serious group who knew what to do in the wilderness; and partly because of a measure I took in the way of delegating responsibility. The day after I arrived I hunted up the outing's leader, whom I'd met the day before—a tall, studious looking gentleman with a very tanned bald head. He looked like a man of reason, though perhaps a hard one to buck in an argument. I said, "Look here, sir. I'm sure you know that last year in Sequoia Park the club had some trouble. According to the record, the ranger was always fighting with your people about one thing or another, and arguing with the wrangler about where to graze your stock. Now, I'm not going to do any fighting like that. If anything happens that's against our park rules, I'll

count on you to straighten it out. If you don't, why, I'll take you in to headquarters. I think we'll get along better that way, don't you?"

I had no idea whether it would work. But the Sierra Club man grinned and ran a hand over his bald head. "Good. Wish the other ranger had done that, instead of running around like a cop on a beat too big for him. You'll have no trouble."

And I didn't. Goes to show that when you get the people involved to do your policing for you, they'll likely do a better job than you can. Later I came to respect the Sierra Club for another reason. All the Yosemite rangers had to have training in rock climbing, and Sierra Club instructors taught us.

The term "rock climbing," I found to my alarm, really meant going straight up sheer cliffs, hammering in little 5-inch steel spikes called pitons as you went, and attaching ropes to them. You had to find the right-size small crack in the rock to hammer in your piton. Your life, and your companions' lives, depended on how well those pitons held.

I decided early that this kind of climbing is a lot tougher than working on sheer ice on a mountain. It's not only more straight up—you can't cut steps. Very often you dangle like a spider from the end of your rope. In all the twists and turns of this dare-devil way of going uphill, our Sierra Club instructors were experts.

That was only one class I found myself in for; during three months of winter when the crowds were gone, all those twenty-three burly Yosemite rangers sat hunched part of every day over classroom desks. We studied public speaking, police work, administration, public relations, how to handle Temporary Rangers, ski rescue. This last also involved outdoor work. On weekends when there was enough snow the Badger Pass ski area was open and the rangers were the ski patrol. The job varied from tobogganing in casualties to rounding up children who had skied away from their parents. One evening I was telling Margaret about following a child's ski tracks away from the slope area. I came upon a red mitten in the snow, then sighted a little girl of about three in a red snow suit, all tangled up in some manzanita brush.

"When I came up to her she looked at me solemnly and said, 'I think there's a bear in this bush. I heard him growl.'

"I assured the young lady that all the bears were asleep at this

time of year. She considered this information while I got her out of the manzanitas, and when we were squared away to go back she looked up and said, "Then he was snoring!" "

Margaret leaned forward, her eyes shining. "Grant, let's not wait any more. Let's adopt a baby girl!"

When we had found out we couldn't have a child of our own we had talked, quite a bit, about adopting one. Now I said, "Margaret, let's! We know it's what we want—and a girl is right, too. She'll be company for you when I'm away. Aren't there people who take care of such things . . . good people?"

Margaret nodded. "I've looked some of them up," she said, "some I knew about in Seattle."

She was ahead of me on good ideas, as usual. We talked about it most of the rest of the night, and the night following. A ranger's daughter, growing up out in the open . . . she'd probably be a tomboy . . . the problem of schools, off in a national park . . . other children to play with . . . and boy friends later for dates . . . "And," Margaret said, "I want her to have a real wedding dress, with lace on it."

"Whoa! She isn't even engaged yet."

Two days later I put Margaret on the bus for Seattle and in March of 1940 we adopted a delightful three-weeks-old baby girl whom we named Shirley. As she grew, there in the beautiful Yosemite Valley, for the next two years, she became more of a delight every day to both of us.

And I became more than ever a responsible family man. I found myself poring through the service bulletins for news of a vacancy at more money. Finally I found it, and came charging home waving the March, 1942, bulletin.

"Listen to this, Margaret! 'An opening is now available for Chief Ranger at Mt. McKinley National Park.' Lou Corbley has quit!"

"So you're going to put in for it?"

"Watch my smoke!"

We were in the war, and I guess that put a crimp in the paper work. I finally got my appointment in June, with orders to report in July.

Margaret and Shirley couldn't go with me. The Japs were on Attu and no families were being sent to Alaska. But the night before I left, Margaret had a special dinner party, with candles on the

table and all the trimmings; she had invited half a dozen of our ranger friends and their wives. We were just about to sit down when the phone rang. It was Chief Ranger Forrest Townsley. When he began to talk I could almost see the smile on his face.

"Grant, old boy, I need you. Come over to the Ahwanee at once and bring your rock climbing equipment."

"But—"

"There's a man a thousand feet up on the cliff back of the hotel. He's stuck there on a ledge. A woman said she heard him yell that he was hurt and couldn't get down. It's up to us, you see. Oh, and bring along two of the others I understand are with you—Duane Jacobs and Floyd McKim. Jacobs will be in charge. And hurry it up, eh, Grant?"

I said, "We'll be there," and hung up. I was disgusted. The speech I made to our guests was different from the one I'd planned on. "Townsley says there's a man stuck on a cliff. We've got to climb up right away and get him down. Jake's to be in charge. Floyd, you're tagged too." The candlelight showed the stricken look on Margaret's face. "I'm sorry, honey."

Margaret said, "Why couldn't that man wait till tomorrow to get himself stuck up there!" Then she smiled faintly at herself. "Better hurry, dear. I'll get out your climbing clothes."

There was a crowd, of course, at the base of the cliff. The Chief Ranger had a powerful electric light, and by its beam we could faintly make out a man high up on the rock wall, waving a hand. We tried yelling at him.

"How did you get up there?"

"Are you badly hurt?"

"How wide is that ledge?"

No answer. The man only waved.

Floyd, Jake and I broke out the pitons, rock hammer and rope, and started going up. We planned to make a rope sling and lower the injured man in it.

It was slow, precarious work, with only the star-shine to see by after we got beyond the effectiveness of Townsley's light. A cold wind came up, making our fingers clumsy; I dropped a couple of pitons and listened to them ting-ting-ting as they bounced a hundred feet down the rock. The crowd increased at the foot of the cliff, and

cheered every time we made an extra ten feet. I got so mad I forgot to be scared. "Those doggone people," I said aloud, "seem to think we're putting on a show for them!"

We made around two hundred feet an hour, though once we came on a chimney—that's a vertical fissure in the cliff—and made better time. It was nearly midnight when we got close to the ledge and just when we were practically there, we were hit by a blinding flood of light. Townsley had rounded up the Yosemite fire engine, and had its searchlight turned on us. We managed to scramble onto the three-foot ledge, then began yelling, "Turn that thing off! We can't see a thing!" "Turn it off!"

The blinding beam simply added to the danger of rock work. We were all waving our hands in front of our eyes. Finally Townsley—or somebody—got the idea. The light was switched off. I turned to the man we had come to rescue. "Where are you hurt?"

"I—well, I guess I'm not really hurt. But I was afraid if I said so you'd make me climb down the way I came. And I can't." His voice sounded young. From what I could see of him he seemed to be wearing an army private's uniform.

"Why did you climb up here?"

"It was kind of a dare. I came to Yosemite on my first leave, with two other guys in my outfit, and I got to bragging. The climbing was easy at first—I angled up, not where you started; and after a while—it got to be easier to keep on up than to go back."

"Where are your friends?"

"They had to beat it. I—I'm AWOL right now. What'll I do?" There was panic in his voice.

Jake said, "We've got to give this fellow a quick lesson in rock work. He's going to rapell down."

The rookie said, "What's that?"

"You put a double rope under your left leg and over your right shoulder, then you lean over backwards from the cliff—and simply walk down."

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes. The bight of the rope acts as a brake."

"I'll fall!"

I said, "We're all going to do it, son. Just you watch us."

Floyd had been groping around the ledge, and had found a

toughly-rooted manzanita bush. We had two 300-foot climbing ropes which we'd tied together; now we looped the middle back of the bush trunk, giving us three hundred feet of double rope dangling down the cliff. While the rookie stared, fascinated, Jake wrapped the rope around his leg and shoulder and went over the cliff out of sight. In a few minutes he shouted, "Down 250 feet . . . another ledge with an anchor bush on it. Come on, Floyd!" Minutes after Floyd left, the rookie and I heard Jake bellow, "Send him down!"

I said, "Stand up, soldier," and rigged the rope around him. Then I took out a split-link carbiner (a kind of snap-ring of heavy steel), and snapped it around both ends of the bight above his hands. "This," I said, "will cinch it, young fellow. If you start to fall, the boys below can stop you simply by tightening on the rope. All you have to do is holler."

"Y-yes, sir."

"Over you go!" The rookie gave a half grunt, half groan, and backed off the cliff. Then he said, "I'd better wait till morning!" and tried to climb back up.

"No, you don't." I gave him a gentle shove. He went down a few feet, checked, finally decided to keep on. I guess it was a case of being more afraid of me than of the rope.

When Jake yelled, "Come a-runnin'—it's late!" I went down fast, and at the lower ledge I said, "This, son, is why we have a double rope. Watch!" I let go one end of the rope and heaved on the other end, thus pulling the entire rope down from around the upper bush. The rookie said, "Oh . . . Now we do it again?"

"Now we do it again. You'll get to love it."

One thousand feet down, when we finally got there, the crowd had departed. So had the fire engine. But Chief Ranger Townsley was still on hand. He said to the rookie, "I'll take charge of you, young man" and aside, to us, "I'll send him on his way in the morning. The army'll work him over enough."

Floyd said, "I should hope so!"

It was one a.m. when I got home. Margaret held onto me tight for a moment, then said, "Hungry?"

"I'm dead. Yes, I'm hungry too."

There was a place still set for me. When I sat down to my farewell

dinner Margaret even re-lit the candles. She said, "A ranger's life is an exciting life, all right—but it's sometimes tough on a ranger's wife. I'm glad there's no rock climbing where you're going, Grant."

"So am I." I figured I knew all the things that could happen at McKinley.



Bring Out the Bodies!

WILL ROGERS ONCE SAID, "I never met a man I didn't like." I doubt if Will ever had the strain put on this gospel that I had when I got back to the pleasant spruce grove that sheltered McKinley Park headquarters.

Everything was changed. The park wasn't closed, but I saw as I walked up from the station that the new hotel was. No tourists were around. When I looked at the roster of park people on the headquarters bulletin board, John Rumohr's name was the only one I recognized. I knew Harry Liek had been transferred to Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota. In his place was a man I'd been told had been promoted from naturalist at Sequoia National Park, Frank T. Been.

I walked into the office marked "Superintendent" and said heartily, "Howdy! I'm Grant Pearson."

"How do you do, Pearson?"

Superintendent Been sat behind his desk looking at me without expression. He had very light hair and eyelashes, which gave his eyes a wide, almost staring look. "So you are my new Chief Ranger? I am glad to see you are prompt."

I looked at the thin face, the thin, erectly-seated body, and felt I should be standing at attention. But I tried again. "Not much doing around here, is there?"

"On the contrary, there is a great deal going on. The military have a camp at McGonagall Pass, where they are testing clothing, food and equipment. This afternoon we shall drive out to Wonder Lake and hike in to visit them."

"Great! I could stand a look at little old Denali."

Supt. Been frowned. "The official name is Mt. McKinley. It is scarcely little."

"Yes, sir."

I got out of there as soon as I could. I wondered what the Seventy-Mile Kid would have thought of the man who had taken over his job. I hunted around for John Rumohr and found him at the dog kennels, looking rather glumly at a dog harness hanging on a peg.

"The super," he said, when I told him about my interview, "is a very precise man. That's a great virtue, you know."

I said, "Sure," and glanced around the kennels. "Say! I see only nine dogs here. Where are the other thirty-three?"

"The superintendent, Grant, is a man of ideas. He says dogs are too expensive. His idea is to stock the patrol cabins ahead of time and make the winter patrols on foot."

"I see." I stood there for a moment, remembering the eager, furry faces that used to pop out of kennels now empty. But dogs eat whether they're working or not. Maybe Been was right.

The trip out to Wonder Lake was a silent one. I was driving, and I was busy soaking up remembered beauties and sniffing the nippy September air. Once, crossing the Toklat, I recalled the trip John Rumohr and I had made down it to the boundary cabin. I ventured to remark, "It's going to be difficult, getting all our boundary cabins stocked before winter sets in. I'd better get people started packing stuff in as soon as we get back."

Been gave me his thin, expressionless look. "I am the superintendent, Pearson. I'll give the orders."

"Yes, sir."

We climbed up to the McGonagall Pass camp two days later. I got an immediate kick out of what that 16-man detail was doing. This was no cheechako outfit. It was organized perfectly, and it was testing out equipment that has since become standard in mountain climbing . . . extremely lightweight tents and sleeping bags . . . dehydrated foods . . . they even had a short-wave radio to communicate with another army detail that was camped 18,000 feet up on Harper Glacier. I talked over it to one of the men up there. "Grant Pearson?" he said. "Say! We found the food cache you guys left in Parker Pass. I'll bring you back a hunk of hardtack." I said, "Fine! I've never eaten ten-year-old hardtack."

Next day Supt. Been and I went with two soldiers testing foot-gear on a round-trip hike up Muldrow to 6,800 elevation. The glacier was the same as ever—a thing of white magnificence, and a thing to be watched out for every second.

Frank Been was a good hiker, and knew how to conserve his strength. Maybe, swinging along up there in the high country, he'd loosen up. But when I said, "We'd best stick to the middle, where we won't be conked by an avalanche," he snapped, "I know that. By 'conked' I presume you mean hit?"

"Yes, sir." I gave up. Altitude didn't seem to improve matters.

I guess there are some people you just can't seem to get along with. It's not their fault, I suppose, and it may not be yours. A matter of mannerisms, but how it can get on your nerves!

Once I saw Frank Been outside headquarters, examining a spruce twig. He had a magnifying glass. He looked absorbed, and happy. He was back with his first love, and I began to see how strange and difficult must have been the transition from naturalist to park superintendent.

I stayed on, trying to do my job as Chief Ranger. I felt, as most rangers did, that defending the country included guarding the parks and the nation's huge investment in them. But the McKinley boundary cabins never did get stocked, and we could make only short winter patrols. We were all stuck at headquarters. I would just as soon have gone out to Moose Creek for four months, but when I suggested that I take the nine dogs and go out there, I got that expressionless stare.

"No. Your duty is here."

This, I suddenly knew, was all I could take.

I walked out of headquarters in a hurry, went tramping through the snow to my cabin, and wrote out a request for a furlough for war work. I cited my training on airplane engines. I knew Been couldn't block the request.

I went back through the spruce grove to headquarters with the furlough request in my pocket. Been was on the porch. He gestured to me.

"Come up here."

I followed him into his office.

"Pearson, I want to tell you something. And I want you to say nothing about it. I have been called into the military. I am putting

you in charge temporarily, as Acting Superintendent. But I do not think you are capable of the job, and I am recommending that you be replaced as soon as possible."

I don't know why or how I held my temper. Must have been years of training as a ranger. I didn't wring his neck, even though I felt sure such action would have improved it greatly.

I guess I had sense enough, in spite of my fury, to realize that this was a fine spot for me. I had friends where Been said he was going to send his derogatory letter; I didn't think they'd believe what he said. But, they'd keep their eyes on me and watch what I was doing. Which would suit me perfectly.

So I simply said, "Yes, sir."

I didn't have long to wait for action. In April, shortly after I had appointed John Rumohr as Acting Chief Ranger, the army took over the 85-room McKinley Park Hotel, dubbing it an Army Recreation Center. Almost immediately we began to have soldiers pouring into the park, each man on a week's furlough. We put in a ski run and a toboggan slide, cleared a skating pond, and took the men on dog-team trips out into the park. I discovered that soldiers behave exactly the same as tourists, only more so. My Yosemite experience was coming in handy.

Just before setting out on a three-day hike as guide to army personnel planning winter maneuvers, I welcomed to the park two of the most important people it had ever received. The Japanese threat to the Aleutians had subsided and Margaret and Shirley had come home. When I saw those two getting off the train—well, as far as I was concerned the sky was red, white and blue and the snow sparkled like Fourth of July fireworks.

Shirley ran into my arms. "Daddy! The conductor said I was a chee-chako, but he's wrong! I'm a little girl, aren't I?"

"You sure are, honey."

It was great to be laughing again with Margaret, carrying Shirley on my shoulder and walking up the road to the spruce grove.

The army's maneuvers lasted six weeks, during which time several hundred Americans who had never been in Alaska before plodded cautiously around the park foothills and tundra in white camouflage suits. The following year even more troops took part, with helicopters. My rangers were involved as guides, and to give warnings, when needed, of natural booby-traps such as river water

suddenly overflowing onto ice. When I got a call in September, '44, from a Col. Ivan Palmer at Elmendorf Field in Anchorage, I figured he was getting an early start on next winter's maneuvers. But the colonel said, "We have an Army Transport Command C-47 reported missing. Last heard from in the Mt. McKinley area. Know anything?"

"No. No planes reported. Think it crashed?"

"I'm afraid so. We're sending planes over to search."

This was the inconspicuous beginning of one of the most highly organized, and by far the most futile, mountain climbing expeditions ever set in motion. Ten days later Col. Palmer phoned and said, "We've found the plane. Crashed, all right. In the park. I'd like you to come down here for a talk. I'm sending a plane for you."

When I arrived at the colonel's headquarters at Elmendorf, he said, "Mr. Pearson, our plane hit the south side of a mountain sixteen miles east of McKinley, near your south boundary."

"That's unexplored area. Unmapped."

"I know. We'd like you to make a flight to the crash scene. See if it's possible to get a party on foot in there. We want to bring out the bodies. We have a plane and pilot ready for you."

"I see. Well . . . sure." I took off next morning in a Mitchell bomber with two army photographers, one on each side of the plane. The pilot had never flown over this part of the Alaska Range; he had no notion of what he might encounter, and neither had I. We flew at 15,000 feet, 3,000 feet above the tips of the range reaching up for us. Over the snowfields the air was very rough. As we approached the crash site on the south side of the range, the bomber hit a sudden down draft. We lost a thousand feet before we could level off. "That," I said, when my teeth had stopped rattling, "is probably what happened to that other plane. Went through a hole in the air and couldn't pull out." The two photographers were clutching their cameras, looking startled.

The pilot nodded. "I'll try it again." He circled and came back. Same result. I didn't particularly care for the express-elevator feeling, and we couldn't get close enough to inspect the area. Next day we had the same luck, but the third day the down-elevator wasn't working; it was clear and smooth, and we circled the crash scene while the photographers took shot after shot and I took notes on possible ways to get to the wreck.

The C-47 had hit near the top of an unnamed Alaska Range peak that looked to be close to 12,000 feet high, east of McKinley between Mt. Brooks and Mt. Mather. I could see one of the plane engines sticking out of the white slope of the mountain, but the rest of the plane had tumbled 1,600 feet down, its pieces strewn about on a small level plateau about 200 feet wide. Only a piece of the fuselage and one wing had kept their original shape. Of course there were no survivors. Two feet of new snow had fallen since the first pictures had been taken ten days before.

I could see that if there was any way possible to reach that tragic wreckage, it would have to be from the north, over the top of the range, then roping down a sheer icy slope that looked, from the air, to be a thousand feet long and in places at a 60-degree angle. It would be highly dangerous, but it might succeed.

When we got back to Elmendorf I found myself in conference with an awesome collection of brass—a lieutenant general, two brigadier generals, and Colonel Palmer.

"I suppose, gentlemen," I remarked, looking over the uniforms gathered around the conference table, "you had some highly valuable papers or special war equipment in that plane."

"Oh, no," Colonel Palmer said, "it was just a routine flight between Anchorage and Fairbanks."

"I see." I then outlined to them the great dangers and high cost involved in getting to the wreckage. "So, gentlemen, I must recommend against sending a party in there, simply to bring out the bodies. It would be a useless risk of lives for the sake of dead men."

Colonel Palmer stroked his chin. "I'm sorry you feel that way, Mr. Pearson. We were going to ask you to head up the expedition."

"As I said, the expedition is most unwise. I'm afraid I'm not your man."

The lieutenant general leaned forward. "We appreciate your position, Mr. Pearson. But you must understand two facts. First, we have no choice in this matter. The father of one of those flyers is a United States representative from New York. We are under extreme pressure from Washington. They believe back there that this expedition can be made a useful part of Arctic warfare training.

"The second fact is this: if you do not care to undertake leading this detail as a civilian, we are quite prepared to see to it that you

are immediately drafted into the armed forces and given the assignment as a direct order from your superiors."

It didn't take me long to reach a decision. "Gentlemen," I said, with what must have been a rueful smile, "I'd like to change my recommendation. A party should go in immediately; from the photographic evidence, that wreckage will very soon be covered with snow. It would then be impossible to find the bodies."

I next found myself talking with a major, a captain, and a sergeant of Elmendorf's Search and Rescue Squadron. My first thought was to go in fast with four men, for whom I knew mountain climbing equipment was immediately available. But the major pointed out that there had been nineteen people on that plane; nineteen bodies to be brought out. I wound up with 44 men—twenty to climb into the wreckage, twenty more to back them up and keep the supply line moving, plus a doctor, a radio operator, a photographer and a tractor driver. The army wasn't short on manpower, at least not at Elmendorf.

It generally takes four months to organize and outfit a party of four men to climb one of the higher peaks of the Alaska Range. I started at noon, the day of my conference with the brass, to make out a list of food and equipment for eleven times that number.

Nobody at the base had had any mountain climbing experience. But next morning one of the three men detailed to me from the rescue squad looked at my list and said, "You call for some sled dogs and outfits. We've just received seven of the latest M-7 snow tractors. I hear they'll go anywhere a dog team can, and haul more stuff. Want to try one out?"

"Sure." Two hours later I found myself piloting a snorting little tractor up the steep snow slopes of a mountain outside Anchorage. The machine worked like a charm. The dogs were scratched.

Elmendorf had no mountain tents, but Sgt. Jim Gale of the rescue squad had an idea. "We've got plenty of lightweight material in the parachute shop. Let 'em make tents."

"Fine. I have some thoughts on what a mountain tent should be." I drew special plans for eleven five-sided tents, each one big enough to hold a team of four men. My idea was that when we moved into the dangerous area, that four-man team would work, live, and cook together, and I could send any team any place with

little danger from slipping on ice or falling into a crevasse, since there would always be four men on a rope.

Seven days later I flew back to McKinley. Everything was organized. Jim Gale and his gang had worked a miracle. The only supplies not already assembled were being flown in from other parts of Alaska. Of course, all that efficiency wasn't cheap; the military have always subordinated cost to speed. But they certainly got things done.

We now had a radio-truck-trailer with power enough to send messages anywhere in the world, this contraption to be based at Wonder Lake; we also had 26-pound portable radios. We had two army trucks full of ropes, tents, stoves, food, ice axes, crampons and other climbing accoutrements. We had two snow tractors, two wounded-personnel trailers, one caterpillar bulldozer—plus an airplane to drop supplies when we got higher up. It was the most thoroughly motorized mountain-climbing expedition in history.

We bulldozed our way through snow-closed passes to Wonder Lake, fighting an October blizzard part of the time. The snow tractors, towing trailers, then sailed us beautifully up to the foot of McGonagall Pass where we were going to set up a base camp.

The route I'd plotted out took us over McGonagall Pass and onto Muldrow Glacier, down the glacier four miles to a feeder glacier that headed south and up to the top of the range between Mt. Brooks and Mt. Mather; unexplored country.

Airplane supply drops began at the top of McGonagall Pass. The first plane arrived thirty minutes ahead of schedule; before my four-man team and I could climb to the top of the pass it had disappeared, the pilot not having spotted the pass in all the white country he saw beneath him. I hastily set up my radio and gave him a call. A voice came back: "Eager Beaver 2-1 to KnJn (our call letters), where are you?" I said, "We'll set off a smoke bomb and tell you. We're tired of carrying the things anyway."

Most of our supplies were to be free-dropped, and they had to hit an area in the pass so small the co-pilot could only shove out one batch each time the plane flew over. After the second drop I saw the packages were breaking badly on the ice at the top of the pass. I ran down to where I had my radio set-up near the drop area, told the pilot to drop the stuff farther back toward the glacier

where the snow was softer, and heard him say "Okay" just as his plane roared over me. I looked up and saw five black objects hurtling out of the sky straight for me. I ran, and suffered nothing more than a 6-foot near miss—fifty pounds of dehydrated soup I wouldn't have cared to swallow all at once.

That night we were snugly installed in a roomy tent with primus stove, plenty of food, warm sleeping bags, even music on the radio—all the comforts of home, and none of it back-packed up a long snow slope. Quite different from 1982! I got on the short wave and ordered more men up from base camp.

In moving my men the four miles down Muldrow to Camp Three, I invented a new technique in glacier travel—which I wouldn't advise any civilian to use. We were taking the snow tractors to haul supplies but I knew that, given a chance, Muldrow would swallow up those machines in a flash. So four of us went ahead of the tractors, roped together and poking at the glacier with ice-axe handles to sound it out for hidden crevasses. If the route was safe for a quarter mile or so, I got on the walkie-talkie and said to the drivers "Bring 'em up!" And here is where the special technique came in: at any place where we weren't quite sure of the snow bridge over a crevasse, we had the driver fix the gas throttle at full, aim the front skis of the clattering little beast at the snow bridge, then jump out and let 'er rip. The tractor snorted ahead at ten miles an hour, and when it got over the bridge one of us would jump in and take over. If I had owned those tractors I'd have been a bit nervous. But they always made it.

Those portable radios let me do something else I very much wanted to do—keep in almost daily touch with John Rumohr at headquarters, via the Wonder Lake radio truck. I had to know how the rest of the park was running. Once the people at park headquarters put four-year-old Shirley on the radio to me. I was crouched in a tent with four other men, with a 90-mile wind raging outside. I expected the blizzard would blow the tent away the next minute. Shirley said, "How is everything, Daddy?"

"Just fine, honey, just fine."

A G.I. looked up at me briefly. "Liar," he stated, and looked down again at the sputtering primus stove.

Most of the men I had with me were completely green at moun-

tain work. I had to be all over the place, training them from the ground, or the glacier, up, in everything from how to walk with crampons to avoiding frostbite. But I got one lucky break. One of the greatest authorities on Alaska mountain climbing, Bradford Washburn of the Boston Museum, suddenly showed up in the McGonagall Pass area with an Air Corps group testing cold weather equipment. I immediately got on the radio to Col. Palmer at Elmendorf.

"Colonel, Washburn's just the man I need. He knows these mountain conditions perfectly. He'd contribute greatly to everyone's safety. And, Colonel, if you have to use a little of the kind of persuasion you used on me, why, go ahead and do it. I need Washburn."

I guess maybe the colonel, or somebody, did use a bit of that kind of inducement. When Brad Washburn showed up at our camp on the glacier he seemed a bit disgruntled. "Looks as if you've got enough men right now. Never saw such a big outfit for mountain climbing." When I explained what I was up against, his long New England face broke into a grin. "Why didn't they tell me these things! Sure I'll help."

With Brad Washburn assisting, I quickly moved off Muldrow and south up the feeder glacier, setting up Camp Four at 7,200 feet. That was as far as it was safe to take the snow tractors. From there on the hard work began.

It started with uphill reconnaissance to the head of the glacier. I roped up with Jim Gale, Washburn, and Sgt. Malcolm Greany, the expedition's photographer. As we hiked up, heading south with the sun in our faces, the glacier narrowed abruptly, with steep slopes rising 3,000 feet on either side of us. These were the most dangerous avalanche slopes I'd ever seen; it would have been sure death to walk up that glacier in milder weather when the snow was loosening.

At the head of the glacier we faced a steep snow-and-ice pitch between two peaks. "See that blue ice up there?" I remarked. "We're going to cut steps in it. Easy work for everybody but the step cutter." Greany looked surprised. This was a new facet of mountaineering to him.

By the time we got up on top of the pass—the summit ridge of

the Alaska Range—we had been climbing seven and a half hours. We had travelled perhaps five miles. Our altimeter registered 11,400. We had come up 4,200 feet.

We could look down to the snow plateau where the plane wreckage lay. All we could see now was a piece of one wing. We also observed that the slope leading to it was almost straight down.

It was 4:30 p.m. when we started back. We had put in the usual trail markers—round sticks three feet long with one end painted black; but we knew night would be on us long before we got back to Camp Four.

It was a squinting, peering, creeping-slow job getting back down, with nothing but star shine to help us spot those black tips against the snow. But I didn't mind. This day's work had proved a vital point.

"Brad," I said once, when we'd stopped to get our bearings, "I'm now convinced it's possible. We can get our people in to that wreckage. Until today I had a lot of doubts."

"Yes. From now on it's a matter of organization."

Dog-tired as I was, I got on the radio as soon as we were back at our tents, ordering more teams up to Camp Four. Two days later I took twelve men up to the 11,400-foot level, carrying up a tent and complete supplies for four men, plus a short wave radio. This was to be Camp Five, and no doubt the highest radio station in Alaska. Washburn and three men were to stay there, Washburn to get on the radio and have a plane drop a thousand-foot rope alongside his tent. He'd then anchor the rope in position to go down the slope to the wreckage, and when he got there he'd signal the plane exactly where to drop complete supplies for twenty men for a week. I was taking no chances on running out of grub at the crash scene. I stayed behind at Camp Four to pick out the men I was going to take over the top of the range.

Everything meshed. When I arrived at the radio tent with twelve picked men, the rope had been dropped, Washburn and two soldiers had it anchored in place and were on their way down. "And we got a bonus," the radio operator said. "Pilot also dropped us a case of forty-eight loaves of bread. What'll I do with it?"

"Wait till we get down the rope, then shove it over the side and let it roll down to us."

"You'll be eating crumbs."

"No," I said, "it's thirty below. That bread is frozen rock-hard by now. A little thing like a thousand-foot free fall won't hurt it."

I hooked myself onto the rope by a snap-ring on my belt and started down. It was not a pleasant experience. After a few feet I came to solid ice, and for the next eight hundred feet I walked on a sheer, slippery sheet, at times almost straight up and down. It didn't help my equilibrium to be carrying a forty-pound pack while doing this combination tight-rope and ice-skate act. I waited at the bottom for the next man; when he got down he was wringing wet with sweat.

"You can't have been perspiring," I said. "It's below zero!"

"Huh! You look kind of damp yourself."

The other eleven men didn't like the trip down any better, but by four o'clock we were all assembled, supplies gathered, tents up, ready to start work. Malcolm Greany looked around, took a deep breath, and said, "What a camp! Mountain peaks behind us, and nothing in front but a 4,000 foot drop to the head of a glacier. Look, you can even see the coast line, a hundred miles away." We named our layout Palm Beach Camp.

Next day the grim and tragic part of the job began—the reason for this whole elaborate, costly climb. We began digging in the snow. The first day we uncovered the main wreckage that had shown in the original pictures; it confirmed my impression from the air. No bodies there. After ten hours' digging, through ten feet of snow, the pilot's compartment was completely exposed. It was a mass of twisted wires and smashed instruments. In a nearby drift we found a few furlough papers, a couple of blankets, and the co-pilot's personal bag. Nothing more.

Next day we dug out what had once been a fifteen-foot long section of the fuselage. It was now smashed flat—no more than three feet thick. Nothing in it but a few blood stains. Even the bucket seats were missing. We searched and probed on both sides, and on up the slope until the grade became so steep nothing could have stopped on it.

We could all see it would be impossible to dig out the complete area where anything from the plane might have landed. I assembled the men. "Tomorrow," I said, "we're going to abandon camp and go back over the hump to our tents at Camp Four. There we'll report to Elmendorf by radio on what we have done and what we

think our chances are of ever finding the bodies. Then await orders."

"Chances, zero," Bradford Washburn remarked. "We'd simply get snowed in ourselves."

"I agree," I said. "Brad, there's one thing more I guess we'd better do. Investigate that engine sticking out of the snow sixteen hundred feet up there."

"Easy," he said. "I'll take three men—Gale, Manual and Fenn—follow the ridge east from the radio tent, and rope down to the engine. But there won't be anything there." He proved next day to be right, but being an irrepressible mountain climber, he didn't just leave it at that. He and the other three climbed to the top of that tragic, unnamed mountain.

After Washburn and his team had gone on ahead next morning, we stored all the remaining food and fuel in the tents. Then I sent three men of each team up the rope over the ice without packs; the fourth man tied all four packs onto a rope and the three men pulled them up. We all made good time up and over. The last team pulled into Camp Four at 6:30 p.m. Captain Perracca of the Air Corps got on the radio to Elmendorf, reported what we had found and gave his recommendations. The answer came back, "Come on out."

Three days later the entire expedition was back at Wonder Lake. Casualties, one sprained ankle and one minor burn. There were now fourteen inches of ice on the lake, topped by three inches of snow . . . a perfect landing field. The army sent in troop transport planes and flew out all the men except nine detailed to drive the motorized equipment back to McKinley Park station.

Those forty-four men had spent six weeks on the climb. They had all volunteered. I asked them how they liked it. Jim Gale summed it up: "We wouldn't have missed it for a million dollars. And I don't think we'd do it again for another million." (Jim Gale himself might have, nonetheless; he became an avid mountaineer. In the next eight years he climbed Mt. McKinley twice.)

For heading up this mountaineering work, Congress awarded me the Medal of Freedom, and the Park Service gave me a "meritorious promotion"—which means I was upped a grade and received a better salary. But I still think that long, costly climb was

unnecessary and wasteful. I don't believe those G.I.'s learned much that could possibly have helped them in any war theater.

As for bringing those bodies out . . . what finer resting place could they have, cradled in that beautiful, rugged, virgin country, deep under a perpetual blanket of clean white snow, guarded by northern lights in winter and the midnight sun in summer?

18



The View from 19,000 Feet

IN AUGUST OF '45 I MET THE REASON—or the smoking remains of it—that McKinley climbers from Hudson Stuck and Harry Karstens on had had such a tough time going up the earthquake-shattered knife edge called Karstens Ridge. Katmai National Monument, with its Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes caused by the eruption of 1912, was three hundred miles away, but it was under my charge . . . one of the side jobs of McKinley Park superintendents. I had never seen the place, and right after V-J Day I decided I'd darn well better take a look at the two million acres I was supposed to be running. No Park Service people were stationed there, only half a dozen Fish & Wildlife men making a salmon study outside the Ten Thousand Smokes area. For all I knew, Katmai might be a poacher's paradise. I also wanted to know what could be set up to take care of any legitimate visitors.

The region was no cinch to get to; you had to fly in, or go by steamer, launch and canoe. I rounded up the Park Service architect, Al Kuehl, and we hitched a 300-mile ride on an Air Force plane from Elmendorf Field to Naknek Air Base just west of the monument. On the way we detoured over the Ten Thousand Smokes; there weren't 10,000 any more, but there were plenty; and as a bonus the pilot flew us directly through the plume of a smoking volcano, 7,000-foot Mt. Mageik. We got a jarring bump as the plane shot straight up three hundred feet, then suddenly stopped. We also got a strong odor of sulphur, and looking down we could see into the volcano cone. It looked like an enormous colander through which steam was being forced at tremendous pressure.

At Naknek Air Base we had to try to find a float plane to take us in to the lake next to the Ten Thousand Smokes area; the only

one we could get was a two-seater that could take only one passenger at a time, and we had to wait over a day for that. Meanwhile, we discovered that the town of Naknek was jumping. The fishing season had just closed and there were what looked like hundreds of workmen from the region's scattered salmon canneries, all in town to celebrate. We had the dubious luck to get a room at Naknek's only hotel. This was a cubicle with two cots and celotex partitions. At 3 a.m. I was waked bolt upright by yelling coming from out in the hall. Al Kuehl opened the door to see what was going on.

Next thing I knew there were two drunken fishermen and two Indian women in the room. Al backed away, and I jumped out of bed. I pushed the two fishermen and one woman out into the hall. The other woman kept screaming, "I want to get away from them! Let me stay here!" I had a different idea. I grabbed her and tried to shove her out the door, but she got a good hold and hung on. Finally I wrestled her out into the hall and got the door slammed shut.

During the rumpus I had heard Al cursing behind me. When it was over I said, "What the devil did *you* have to cuss about? It was you who let 'em in—then backed off and let me get 'em out."

Al had a camera in one hand. He said, "I just missed the picture of a lifetime! My doggone flash attachment wouldn't work. What a shot—you in your pajamas, struggling with an Indian maiden. Boy! You sure looked cute."

"Huh! You were lucky. People have had cameras busted for less."

Next morning Al and I flipped for it, and Al won; I took off first, under lowering clouds, with a tent and enough grub to last a week if the weather should close in any more. In the little plane, flying low over the fifty-mile length of Naknek Lake, I was astonished to see that two-thirds of Katmai Monument didn't seem to have been affected at all by the eruption. The lake was lined with spruce, quaking aspen and white birch; I could see big brown bears, moose, deer and countless birds; and I knew that the monument's lakes were one of the greatest spawning grounds in the world for sock-eye salmon.

The actual Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, when Al and I finally got up to it on foot, was a scene of awesome, colorful desolation fifty miles long and twenty miles wide—a huge field of volcanic sand painted blue, red and ochre, with an odor of sulphur hanging

over it and occasional plumes of smoke from the fumeroles that hadn't died out. Slashing through this scene of cataclysm were streams with straight walls fifty feet high, cutting down through the sand, ash and pumice to the pre-volcanic level. We found one creek where the water was almost hot. "Great for washing dishes," I said. "Let's camp here." We did and found that that water heated up the surroundings enough so we could sleep without sleeping bags. "This should make a hit with tourists," Al remarked, "if we could ever get 'em in here."

Right then and there, sitting in our tent in the sulphurous valley, we began to scheme out ways and means to bring in visitors and take care of them. These plans eventually resulted in a string of five fine wilderness tent-camps on remote lakes and rivers, all served by seaplanes of Ray Peterson's Northern Consolidated Airlines. The main camp at Brooks River is probably the most isolated tourist accommodation in the whole park system. Ray, as park concessionaire, organized circle trips that included stops at some of the prize trout and salmon fishing spots in America, as well as low-level flights over Katmai's volcanic destruction scene with its deceptively peaceful white columns of smoke.

This brooding, odorous wasteland had been created in one thundering, fiery week in June of 1912. It was a volcanic blow-up the like of which you'd have to search the records of geology to equal.

This was the sequence of destruction: earthquake tremors caused landslides on the semi-dormant Katmai volcano; at the same time huge cracks appeared in the green valley at the mountain's foot. Lava boiled up through the cracks, followed by a great, pulsing flow of red hot sand. Other craters became active and smoking, the one called Novarupta began throwing up huge lava rocks; then, in daily succession, came four thunderous explosions that blew away the entire top of the mountain. Six cubic miles of ash and sand were hurled into the air.

A vivid and frightening description of what must have happened is given by Robert F. Griggs of the National Geographic Society, who led the first expedition into the region: If the eruption had been on Manhattan Island, he said, the smoke and steam would be seen in Albany; the sound of the explosions would be heard in Chicago, and the sulphuric fumes would eat clothes on lines in

Denver.* Ashes would be a foot deep in Philadelphia, and there would be no point to rescue work in New York City . . . it would have been opened in yawning chasms, and the lava that boiled up would be changed by hot gases into incandescent sand that would overflow everything, covering all but the tips of the tallest buildings.

Save for sound, there was no warning in Alaska. Ashes began falling out of a clear sky on the town of Kodiak, a hundred miles away. At the little village of Savonoski, twenty miles from Katmai on the shore of Naknek Lake, the people barely had time to escape with their lives. This is how American Pete, chief of the village, describes it: "The Katmai mountain blew up with lots of fire, and fire come down trail from Katmai with lots of smoke. We go fast (from) Savonoski. Everybody get in skin boat. Hell of a job. We come Naknek one day (60 miles). Dark, no could see. Hot ash fall. Work like hell. Too bad, never can go back Savonoski to live again. Everything ash. (Was) Good place, too, you bet. Fine trees, lots moose and bear. Lots fish in front of barabara (houses). No many mosquitoes." In other words, an Alaska paradise had suddenly turned into a sulphurous hell.

A writer in 1922 offered this consolation: "The vents in the Valley are now a safety valve. There is thus no likelihood of the return to a dangerous condition." So much for prophecy. Thirty-one years later, in February of '53, Mount Trident, four miles from Katmai, erupted and hurled smoke and ash six miles into the air. A lava flow boiled half a mile down the mountain. But this was no Katmai explosion; at Brooks River Camp forty miles from Trident, only a quarter inch of ash fell. This would be a nuisance to wild life, fish and people; but it wouldn't harm them.

In January of '47 one of the facts of postwar life caught up with me. Frank Been had been discharged from military services; by regulation he had to be given back his old job. I was to revert to Chief Ranger.

I knew what I had to do, and I did it. I put in for an immediate transfer, to anywhere at all.

** Residents of Port Townsend, Washington, reported five days after the eruption that sulphuric acid from Katmai, 1500 miles north, was corroding brass on their doorknobs and boats.*

It was deadly slow in coming. In my years of rangership I had run up against many characters who had rubbed me the wrong way, and had learned to keep a leash on my temper; but never before had I found myself at violent personal odds with a man directly above me. In February I got a letter from Bradford Washburn. It changed my entire outlook. "Grant," he wrote, "I'm organizing an expedition to climb McKinley, and I need you along."

("Need you along." Sounded as if he were quoting from my radio message to Elmendorf about *him*.)

"This is a dual-purpose climb. The first is scientific, to check cosmic ray activity from 18,000 feet, considerably higher than before. We'll have special equipment dropped by parachute. We'll also measure glacier movement, collect geologic specimens, do survey and mapping work.

"The climb's second purpose is to make background films for a moving picture about mountain climbing, called *The White Tower*. You may know the book. The RKO Pathe people are doing the financing, and for publicity reasons I've named the climb 'Operation White Tower.' Grant, how about joining us? I think I can help you get yourself detailed as a representative of the Park Service."

He could, and did. I told myself it was the scientific aspect of the expedition that led me to join; but I knew the real reasons involved my friendship with Brad Washburn . . . plus a desire to get away from the vicinity of the superintendent's office, even if I had to climb 20,000 feet to do it.

As soon as Brad began to assemble his equipment in a plane hangar at Anchorage, I saw he had learned plenty from his army materiel-testing days; this was the best-outfitted expedition I had ever been on, not excepting the massive C-47 crash climb.

There were twelve men and one woman in the party that met in Anchorage the first week in April. The woman was Barbara Washburn, Brad's wife; she became the first woman to climb McKinley. Among the men, I spotted immediately my able assistant on the C-47 climb, Jim Gale . . . now a civilian. Representing the Air Force was Lt. William Hackett. Others on the roll were Bob Craig, weatherman; Bill Sterling, reporter; George Browne, artist; Bob Lange; Hugo Victorine, cosmic ray expert; two RKO-Pathe cameramen, Bill Deeke and George Wellstedt; and Earl Norris, dog-team

driver. Chris Christenson, Anchorage's famous bush pilot, was going to fly all of us but Earl and his dogs directly from Anchorage to Muldrow Glacier near McGonagall Pass. Just before I took off Margaret phoned. My transfer had come through.

"'On July 1,' " she read, "you will report at the town of Sitka, Alaska, to become superintendent of two National Monuments, Sitka and adjacent Glacier Bay.' That's good, isn't it, Grant?"

"I think so. We won't be leaving Alaska, anyhow." I could get on with a free mind to the task of putting some fresh Pearson footprints on top of Denali.

"What a way to climb a mountain!" I said as I climbed into Chris' plane, out on the ice of Lake Hood where Chris was taking off on skis.

"You'll get used to it," a mechanic grinned. "You may even wish Chris could take you all the way up." He was more right than he realized.

"I usually try to avoid glaciers," Chris remarked. "They reach up and pull you down too fast." I merely fastened my seat belt and said, "They're softer than rocks."

Chris made thirteen perfect landings on Muldrow. Then the Air Force took over; the Tenth Rescue Squadron at Elmendorf bombarded us with food and equipment, most of it free-fall, the delicate instruments by parachute. I could almost hear those guys hollering "Bombs away!" as they let fly with boxes of grub aimed at us (two of which made landings in a crevasse, by the way, and became food for the ice worms; all the rest were right on target).

This, as Irvin S. Cobb once said, was roughing it deluxe. At our main camps we had airplane delivery of the fanciest foods mountain climbers ever dined on: fresh-frozen peas, carrots, squash, hamburger, chicken, fruits and berries. We also had three lightweight battery-operated radios; I got on the radio one evening and talked to Margaret at headquarters. Reception was perfect. After ascertaining that I was well, happy, and not thinking of staying permanently on the mountain, she said, "Darling, maybe I shouldn't tell you this, way off up there . . . but today, in Fairbanks, I actually had the first fresh strawberries of the season."

"Why, dear, that's nothing. We have 'em up here every night."

As for cooking at high altitudes, that little problem a mountain throws at you was solved once and for all, by pressure cookers.

Back in '32 I had tried to cook beans at 11,000 feet, and after six hours they still rattled when I dished them out. This time, at 18,000 feet, I did up a delicious mess of beans in an hour and a half. At that same altitude, up on Harper Glacier, we had a complete small house (in which to take cosmic ray measurements) dropped to us in sections. It was pre-fab, and not handsome architecturally, but at 18,000 feet one is not choosy.

Denali, of course, did not take all this thwarting of his anti-social nature lying down. On our very first trip up the glacier, Jim Gale, Bob Craig and I started out roped together, equipped, we figured, for any emergency. After three miles we elected to stop for lunch. I was leading and decided to leave the route we were travelling to head for an exposed moraine. This was a pile of dirt and rocks that would make warmer sitting than glacier ice.

We had bunched together for a few minutes. I didn't notice that Bob Craig had not gone back to his position at the rear end of the rope.

I've developed a habit of constantly poking my ice axe ahead of me to feel for crevasses. Now, as I put some weight on the axe, it made a sudden lunge downward, and the front of my right snowshoe gave way. I threw myself backward to safety. At the same instant I saw Bob, alongside me about ten feet away, disappear into the glacier. I saw that Jim Gale, forty feet back in the middle of the rope length, had been pulled off his feet and was being dragged, spread-eagled, toward the hole Bob had fallen into.

I ran back behind Jim as fast as my snowshoes would let me, threw myself on my ice axe and stopped him with my end of the rope. I yelled "Lie flat, Jim!" tied my rope to the axe, went back for the axe Jim had dropped when he was yanked off his feet, and used it as a second anchor.

Jim was only five feet from the lip of the crevasse; Bob Craig dangled thirty-five feet below. (I knew how he felt.) I yelled down, "Are you all right, Bob?"

"I will be, as soon as I get out of here!"

The rope was stretched tight, with Jim caught in a bind in the middle. The only way he could be gotten out of the loop was to pull his pants off, which he and I forthwith did. Pantless, he helped me lower a rope and go through the usual crevasse-rescue operation: pull up Bob's pack and snowshoes; lower ice axe and cram-

pons to help him climb out; then take up slack rope as he climbs, so we can hold him fast if he slips.

The above takes only 12 seconds to say; but it took us an hour and thirty minutes to get Bob up out of that crevasse. We then had our delayed lunch; this time sitting on glacier ice.

The mountain made one more try, in which we almost lost the dog-team and sled, freighting up to our 11,000-foot camp; then Denali gave up the crevasse ploy and tried throwing a blizzard at us. It was a humdinger. It lasted for six days, and for a while it blew at 60 miles an hour with gusts, Bob Craig estimated, at over a hundred m.p.h. It immediately blew two of our tents to pieces before we could lower them. We had to crawl from one to the other on our hands and knees . . . nobody could stand in that breeze. Barbara Washburn worked alongside us as we wrestled with the tents and finally took refuge in the snow-block igloos we had built for such emergencies as howling snowstorms. "This," she said, eyeing the white igloo walls appreciatively, "is a refreshingly different kind of housekeeping. You stay inside your refrigerator and keep warm; your food stays outside and keeps cold."

The six days we were immobilized not only gave my 47-year-old body a chance to get acclimated to the rarefied air of 11,000 feet but, it dawned on me one noon, looking around at my companions contentedly chomping on hamburger, that I was getting more enjoyment out of living and working with these fine people than I was out of the climb itself which, after all, in spite of the air drops, was still murderously hard work.

And the hardest part began, as always, when the storm cleared and we started up the serac-split hogback of Karstens Ridge. Most of the gang, including Barbara Washburn, went up at the experienced climber's steady, rhythmic pace, moving camp supplies to 15,000 feet. I did, too. But my lungs, heart and muscles were saying, "Hey! We're not as young as we used to be." I ignored them. I felt a foolish pride that I could keep on, lugging my 35-pound pack, while George Wellstedt and Earl Norris, both hit by the altitude, had to turn back and quit the climb.

At 18,000 feet, our last camp before the dash to the summit, the altitude got Bill Sterling and Hugo Victorine. They could go no further (though Bill later made it to the top of the lower North Peak.)

We were going up the next morning. That night I tossed and turned and couldn't sleep. "Cut it out, Grant," I said to myself. "This is a sign of altitude sickness. You can't have that. Go to sleep!" In the morning George Browne looked at me and said, "Looks like you were awake all night, too."

"Not quite." Brad Washburn stuck his head in our tent. "It's a perfect day for it!"

"Brad," I said, "I don't specially want to go up today."

"Neither do I," said George.

Brad looked surprised. "Oh, come on," he said. "It'll be the last climb. How do we know what the weather will be like tomorrow?"

"Well, okay." Maybe, I told myself, it was just the excitement of getting back up on top of the world that had kept me awake.

The nine of us set out after a fast breakfast, Brad in the lead, me bringing up the rear. The first part of the climb was easy. There were no crevasses. The peak of McKinley gleamed white against the blue. We trudged uphill for an hour. At 19,300 feet the thing I had been afraid of happened.

My heart began to bump around in my chest. The blue sky and the white peak disappeared. Everything turned black. I sat down.

In the next few moments my brain must have gone at 2,000 r.p.m. This was oxygen starvation . . . but it wasn't bad . . . I could feel the strength seeping back into my muscles . . . I could probably make it to the top . . . the steepest part of the climb was over . . . Brad had climbed Denali once before . . . we two would be the first to climb it twice. But I knew about altitude sickness. Maybe I'd have to be carried back down. That could wreck the whole expedition; at the least, it would cheat two men out of their chance to stand up there on the summit.

Finally the answer came to me, as clear as if it had been spoken aloud: "Pearson! What did you leave up there in '32 that you're so all-fired anxious to go back up and get?"

Brad came up, looking worried. "Grant, we're going to rest an hour. Then maybe you'll feel like going on."

"Nothing doing. And don't you try to sweet-talk me into it, Brad. The mountain has just spoken to me and he's ordered me off his front porch."

Brad gave me a straight look. "Grant, you're enough of a climber

to know what you're doing. Want someone to go back with you?"

"No. It's an easy walk back down to camp, and no crevasses. You guys go on; time's a-wastin'."

Brad grinned, and stuck out a mittened hand. The line of eight climbers, eight of my very good friends, started on for the top. I sat there on the snow for a few minutes, breathing easily and facing back down the great slope I had come up.

Sitting there at 19,000 feet, looking far out over hundreds of miles of green tundra, blue lakes and high white peaks, a new feeling came to me, as it sometimes does to men when face to face with truth . . . a warming realization that it wasn't the summit of Denali that was truly important—it was the great land of Alaska itself, all the wide, wonderful reaches with their scatterings of brave, hard-working, friendly people. This land of mine had more to offer than a cold and treacherous glacier leading by grinding work up to a windswept granite goal.

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On with the New

WHEN WE CAME DOWN OFF THE MOUNTAIN the splashy blue and yellow tundra flowers nodded at me in the warm sun. It was mid-June, the start of the park's brief summer. Back at headquarters, Margaret had our household goods packed. Three days later we were on our way to Sitka.

Coming into the curving bay of Sitka and seeing the peaceful little town with its Russian church thrusting a carrot-shaped steeple into the air, I knew that this, for me, was to be a period of contemplation, and of marking time. I was to be in charge of 54 acres, including a collection of totem poles, a replica of a Russian blockhouse, and the site of an 1804 battle in which the Russians had defeated the Kon-Siti Indian tribe at their ancestral village. Most important to Margaret and me, Shirley was now of school age, and there was a fine school at Sitka.

But I was no townsman, even in a town of a mere 1,800. Not until I stood in the prow of the launch threading its way into iceberg-studded Glacier Bay, and saw the Monument's mountains rearing up ten to fifteen thousand feet, did I begin to feel at home in this new domain.

Glacier Bay Monument is larger than McKinley; its 3,600 square miles hold dozens of snow peaks and twenty glaciers, many of them ending at salt water in ice cliffs 250 feet high. Huge hunks of ice were always breaking off these cliffs, with a great booming crack that always startled me. Even more startling were the 30-foot waves some of these new-born icebergs created.

This was a land of long, narrow fiords reflecting the dark green of dense spruce and hemlock forests. It was a fishing paradise for three kinds of bears (for people, too), lavish browsing for deer, and

absolutely no accommodations for tourists. Visitors flew in or came by boat, and cruised about the inlets in little launches. (The smaller the boats the farther they kept away from iceberg-hurling glacier snouts.) Some tourists buzzed the glaciers in small float planes, occasional mountaineers climbed the snow-peaks like 15,000-foot Mt. Fairweather, famed beacon of Alaska Gulf navigators. (According to early sea captains, if this peak were in view when your ship left Sitka, you could count on fair weather all the way across the gulf. Personally, I wouldn't trust any mountain to take charge of the weather a hundred miles at sea.)

My main patrol job, besides keeping an eye out for poachers, was to give out fishing advice, navigation maps, and warn of danger from drifting flotillas of icebergs. Cruising around on my aquatic inspection trips, I studied those bergs by the hour. Occasionally, if a berg-top had been too long in the sun, or if some tiny thing happened to upset its nervous balance, such as a seagull lighting upon it, the whole berg would tremble slightly, then slowly and majestically turn over, exposing all its hidden, unexpected bulk as it did so. It came to me that you could look at people much as you looked at icebergs . . . the part you saw didn't often show much, but if you watched closely you'd see the signals that told you something was about to happen. This philosophy has worked pretty well for me; in reverse, it is also a very fine reason for not getting out of a boat and climbing around on an iceberg.

In January of '49 the postman at Sitka handed me a letter bearing a Washington postmark and the familiar arrowhead seal of the park service. I put it aside, figuring it was routine business and no doubt dull. When I got around to opening it, I found I had been appointed superintendent of Mt. McKinley National Park.

I put the letter down. If I had been near the bell-rope of that Russian church, Sitka would have been treated to a bell-ringing such as she'd never heard in her life. Back home to McKinley!

I must have had as broad and foolish a grin on my face as a man can achieve, when I handed the letter to Margaret. She read it, said, "Oh, darling!" and rushed into my arms. As we were holding each other Shirley came in. I said, "Shirley, do you want to leave school?"

"No. What for?"

"To go back to McKinley."

"Hurrray!" Shirley ran forward, reached up and made it a threesome of people with their arms around each other.

When the train carried the three of us over the familiar Riley Creek trestle, around the curve and into McKinley Park station, everything looked the same; but this time I was prepared for changes. I had heard rumors of disputes. I found the main one was between the Park Service and the Alaska Railroad—a squabble between two government agencies—on the running of the hotel. There was another ruckus on between the Park and the Alaska Road Commission. Eight out of the ten rangers who were at McKinley when I left had transferred or quit. The two still there were John Rumohr, now Chief Ranger, and Bill Clemmons, who had come on the job six months before I left.

Frank Been had been transferred to become assistant superintendent at another park, at the same grade and rate of pay. I understand he fought the transfer as a demotion, lost, and left the park service six months later.

I settled the governmental squabbles, and persuaded one of my best rangers, Oscar Dick, to return. He had turned down a promotion to get out. Then I got back to the job of building up the park. Tremendous changes, still below the surface, were about to take place. When the Alaska Highway had been opened to tourists, they had immediately rolled up a great demand to be able to drive to McKinley; a 160-mile gravel road, dubbed the Denali Highway, was now being built. Other tourists were flying in from the States. I put in large camp grounds with modern plumbing at Savage River, Teklanika and Wonder Lake, set up a park museum at headquarters (a longtime dream of mine, and one that fascinated our now adolescent Shirley). I laid plans for a tourist center and observation building at Eielson, with broad picture windows looking out at the mountain. We built four modern ranger residences at headquarters . . . the Pearsons now lived in a house hooked up to new electrical, water and sewer systems. I got the notion of telling Alaska people themselves about their park, gathered together films on mountain climbing, wildlife management and conservation. I was surprised at the variety of reactions I got.

G.I.'s said, almost unanimously, "Gee, I'd like to climb that mountain!" College juniors and seniors said, "Say! I'd like to go

there and study all that wild life." Men in business clubs and companies said, "Conservation is okay, but you're bottling up all that game. Where does that leave us when we want to go hunting?" (I had the answer to that: the Park acted as a needful incubator for adjoining areas.) I even took this show on the road, Outside. One of the honors I received, for giving it at Boys' Town, Nebraska, was the title of Admiral in the Nebraska Navy. Far as I know, no tourist from Nebraska ever came up hunting for Admiral Pearson. But with all these projects going, I was as busy as a beaver in a spring flood, getting ready for the day a ribbon would be cut on the Denali Highway.

I knew that in the spring of '57 the first cars would roll up to the entrance house we were building, and from then on they'd come in a steady stream, probably nothing like the crowds I'd seen at Arch Rock gate in Yosemite, but I had an idea that this was going to be the beginning of a new era for the wilderness I was guarding—an era of trailers and tents, of happy people by the hundreds wandering along the streams and across the tundra, of the flash of chrome in the sunlight as cars wound along the road through the wilderness passes from the spruce grove at headquarters to the willows at Wonder Lake. I had a sense of change, and a feeling that my work here was about done.

By the fall of 1956 I had spent more than thirty years in the park service. Now I was about to be greeting more and more visitors . . . smiling at more and more tourist remarks . . . giving more and more speeches . . . seeing more and more people look admiringly at my uniform with its insignia of rank . . . and somehow, I began to feel more and more tired. When I told Margaret what I had in mind, she said, "I don't know about your work being finished, Grant. But oh, how wonderful that you won't have to spend another whole long winter herel"

I said, "Guess I feel the same way," and sat down and wrote out my letter requesting retirement from the National Park Service. Margaret and Shirley had spent the last three winters away from me and the park, at a home we had built in Los Altos, California. It was rough on all three of us, but it was the way Shirley could have a home with her mother while she went through high school.

I mailed my letter at the post office, and walking back up the road

through the trees I sensed a new lightness in my feet, a new awareness of my surroundings, and underneath, a feeling of sudden loss such as I'd never had before in my life.

I had one plan, a small one, but I'd had it for quite a while. Now I could get on with it: I staked out a five acre home-site claim on government land, on the tundra alongside my old friend and grayling-dinner provider, Moose Creek. The site was north of Wonder Lake, just outside the Park, right near where Little Johnnie had had one of his trap-line trails; most important, it had a fine view of Denali's crest.

Home site regulations are much the same as in homesteading. If you ever want to take out one, you have to do some work on the site to prove up your claim, or back it goes to Uncle Sam. After Shirley's graduation from high school the following spring, I enlisted her to help; the two of us came back from Outside and went to work on a fine 12-by-18 foot log cabin. It was to have four big windows, smooth board floor, big iron stove, kitchen sink with a drainpipe running out of it, and a fine spring nearby. When the last of the green roof-paper was on, and the stovepipe set in place, Shirley stood back and looked at the cabin, eyes sparkling; then she turned and looked out across the tundra toward the park. "Daddy," she said, "our tundra home has a 94-mile front yard—clear to McKinley Park station!"

There were still a few weeks before September frosts would begin to nip at us, and I seized the time to do some writing I'd been wanting to get at—notably about the spectacular birth I'd seen of an Alaskan lake. Most Americans think of lakes as permanent pieces of geography that have been around for the benefit of boatmen since before the Indians crossed Bering Strait. That's far from true in Alaska. Up here you'll see geology happening right in front of your eyes—rivers destructively changing their beds, glacier moraines dumping their loads of rock, earthquakes shunting the terrain around in landslides. Something like this happened one June in McKinley. This is the story (later published in the *Alaska Sportsman*): three days of rain had caused great floods that washed away bridges and chewed up the park road. People in the park felt small earthquakes, and heard rumbling avalanches in the high mountains. It was spring, and nature was rearranging the furniture. An airplane pilot reported to me that he'd spotted a small landslide

in Stony Creek Canyon near Highway Pass. When I got up there three days later I saw that what had looked small from the air was actually a movement of millions of cubic yards of frozen earth. This perma-frosted real estate had slipped almost a quarter mile down the canyon-side to cover the creek bottom a hundred feet deep. In six weeks the dam thus built created a beautiful mile-long blue lake. This new-born body of water soon acquired its quota of grayling, water birds and beavers—a particularly resourceful colony that had moved in when their homes downstream had been left high and dry as the dam cut off their water supply.

One cold morning Shirley and I nailed the shutters on the cabin windows and took off for another of those balmy California winters; but by now I knew there was one drawback to this temperature-controlled existence. It is impossible to live on government retirement pay, even though mine was better than half my full salary. Next summer I was back in the Park, as a civilian, working for a construction company on a two-story personnel apartment house, a building I'd put in for when I was superintendent.

I was thinking of opening a motel on the Denali Highway; but I was really at loose ends, and the feeling of emptiness was growing. The day the United States Senate passed the bill making Alaska a state—June 30, '58—I was out at Toklat dedicating a placque to Harry Karstens. Among the small crowd there was my old friend Bobby Sheldon, he who once cooked up the mailable flapjack. Bob said, "Grant, now that it's official, why don't you run for the state legislature? Be representative from this district."

"Huh? Well, I've thought about it." I wasn't going to let on that this was a brand new idea to me.

"What are you, anyway—Republican or Democrat?"

"I've always voted a split ticket, but I've favored the Democrats."

Bob was a Democrat, and a politician with a string of government jobs to his credit, including postmaster of Fairbanks. From the line-up of the Territorial Legislature, the Democrats were the majority party in Alaska. Bob said, "Better make up your mind."

"I need some time to think about it."

"All right, but don't think too long. Filing's at Fairbanks. It closes in two days."

After the ceremony I strolled away from the crowd and stood looking up toward McKinley. What I had been thinking about up

there, a thousand feet from the top, came back to me—the feeling that this land and its people were something pretty doggone important.

But I'd never in my life done any politicking. I took the full two days to chew on the matter; on the evening of the second day I came out of it, rounded up a plane, flew to Fairbanks and filed as a Democrat fifteen minutes before the midnight deadline.

The 18th Alaska District, which includes McKinley Park as one small corner, is bigger than the whole state of New York. It has a total of 4,000 residents, half of whom are Indians. It has 937 registered voters.

The primaries were in August. If caribou could vote, I'd know where to go to campaign, because they mostly bunched up together, but I didn't know what to do about those hundreds of square miles with only one or two people on 'em.

Bob Sheldon, who had become my unofficial campaign manager, said, "Don't do anything. If you can't beat those other three fellows in the primaries, without you going around shouting from the roof-tops, you'll have no chance to beat that Republican, Jimmy Huntington, anyway." Jimmy was a native, the owner of a trading post, and former North American dog mushing champion. He was the only one filing for the Republicans.

So I did nothing; but before the primaries I used a bit of strategy. I wrote to the other three Democrats and told them that if they were nominated I'd support them. These fellows were all businessmen: Tex Harrison, an equipment operator in Galena; Eugene Steffen, who ran a trading post there, and Tim Wallard, an old-time mining man. They all wrote back and said they'd reciprocate on the deal; Tim Wallard added, "Only reason I filed was that I heard four days before closing that no one had filed and I sure hated to see it go to a Republican by default."

I won, two to one over the next highest Democrat . . . and right here let me explain a little intricacy of that primary vote. Cross-voting was allowed then (it's since been abolished); and it was the Republican practice to gang up and vote for the weakest Democrat in the primaries, then turn around and clobber him in the main election.

Jimmy Huntington campaigned all up and down the district; I simply sent out cards and posters. The Democrats had no money

in the kitty for travel, and neither had I. Moreover, shortly before election I got word that Margaret had had a minor heart attack. I flew out at once to California, and it was some time before I knew how the vote had come out.

When the 937 ballots were tallied, the cross-vote-and-clobber tactic hadn't worked, if that's what had been tried. I had won by 92 votes.

Here is something about voting in the far north that most Alaskans are quite proud of: all the native Indians and Eskimos have the vote, and there is hardly ever any split along the line of native *vs.* white. In places where Jimmy Huntington was known, for instance, both whites and natives voted for him; in the larger population centers, I was better known. In Nenana, which is two-thirds Indian, Jimmy and I divvied the vote exactly, each of us getting 59 out of 118 ballots.

Down in Juneau in the legislative halls, I found myself immediately lost in an overgrown wilderness of rules, regulations and restrictions. I'd visited the territorial legislature, but all I knew about legislative procedure was that when somebody wanted to talk he'd jump up and shout, "Mr. Speaker!" If two or three did it at once, the Speaker would pick the man he wanted to do the talking.

So I bought myself a copy of Roberts' *Rules of Order* in a Juneau bookstore and memorized it in my hotel room for two hours every night. I discovered that there are more devious legal meananderings in that book than there are caribou trails on Toklat Flats. I finally got 'em down pat, but it took doing.

There were forty of us representatives milling about in January of '59, each happy to have a finger in the big, new pie—the setting up of a brand-new state organization. We had to start from scratch, without even a Speaker. We managed to pick a temporary chairman, and he appointed a committee on committees; all forty of us then had to write a letter saying what two or three committees we wanted to be on. I put in for Fish & Game and Natural Resources. I got Natural Resources, but got stuck on Finances instead of Fish & Game. (I found out later that somebody had said I ought to be good on finances because I'd been superintendent of McKinley Park and knew about handling money. That guy was no friend of mine.)

In that new-state, new-day atmosphere, I learned fast about the

tricks and deadfalls and treacherous snow bridges of politics—the lobbying, the religious blocs, the under-cover shenanigans.

A state legislature, I soon learned, is like a kitchen—if you can't stand the heat you'd better stay out. I got used to it—even got so I could cook up some things of my own. I worked like a dog on the first bill I introduced, setting up state parks and recreation areas. I wrote to every state in the union to find out how they handled such things. I spent forty hours just writing out the bill. When I got it all done I couldn't see a hole in it.

I'd forgotten about the mining people. A representative backed by mining interests put through an amendment that wrecked that bill of mine with the sudden effectiveness of an avalanche. This amendment threw out all the careful plans I'd laid out, and simply left everything up to the governor. Before I knew it, the amended bill was tobogganed through the House. I was so mad I wanted my name taken off it.

Then I got together with a veteran politician, who had been a member of the Territorial Legislature. He said, "Grant, I think we can do something with those twenty men in the Senate. Let's put together another amendment that will set the bill back on its feet." We did, and got it through the Senate; the amendment stood up in the Senate-House conference, but my politically-seasoned friend said, "Not now. Bring that conference bill up the last day of the session." I did, and we slammed it through in the closing hours. The mining people's representative happened not to be there that day. When I told him about it later, all he said was, "Grant, I'm in the legislature to protect the interests of the mining industry. I had to do it." I think the poor fellow believed what he said.

You can trust a skilled politician any time to throw a fast belay that would yank a bill out of a political crevasse. For instance:

A very good real estate measure was introduced, setting up a real estate board, business regulations and fair practice rules. A lawyer in the House tossed in an amendment stating that any lawyer could handle real estate transactions without having to have a real estate license. It passed. My friend asked for a recess of two minutes, quickly wrote out an amendment to the amendment that stated, "Real estate men shall be enabled to handle any legal transaction without having passed the bar." This also passed! After noon recess the lawyer withdrew his original amendment, saying on the

floor of the House, "That fellow spoiled my lunch for me by sitting across the restaurant grinning as if he were eating canary."

It wasn't all that hectic, of course. Much wise legislation went through with speed and efficiency. We passed 200 bills in the 81 days of that first session, including the whopping big main organization bill that put Alaska on the road as a state of the U.S.A.

One bill almost got lost in a blizzard of amendments. This was the Ice Pool Bill, legalizing gambling on the ice pools held at Nenana, Fairbanks, Ruby and some smaller places. People bet on the day, hour, minute and second the ice in spring would start to move down-river, and had been doing it for years, although it was strictly illegal. All the main pools were non-profit, except to the communities as a whole that ran them.

An amendment was hitched onto the Ice Pool Bill legalizing dog races. They were also illegal. It passed. Then another amendment was tacked on, legalizing fish derbies (pools for the biggest fish catch). Then the religious bloc put on a rider legalizing bingo and the entire bill was passed.

Then the governor vetoed it . . . but before he did so, word had gone out that he was going to. Immediately a number of men, supposedly professional gamblers, rushed hastily around getting signatures to a referendum petition to go on the next ballot, legalizing *all* gambling in Alaska—as it is in Nevada. That measure would probably have won—simply so Alaskans could continue betting on the annual ice pools. But we legislators fooled the gamblers. We passed the Ice Pool Bill, with its kite-tail of amendments, over the governor's veto.

When I got back to Los Altos after the session was over, Margaret had almost recovered. Shirley was happily married to a soldier stationed in Hawaii, Jim Younger, a fine, handsome young PFC she'd met in Alaska while he was on leave. (They were married in Honolulu while I was tied down in Juneau.) We got a small windfall in the form of a TV film I'd put together and narrated, on the '47 McKinley climb, which was now getting a repeat run and bringing in a little much-needed revenue. We decided to sell our house in the California foothills and build a home in Nenana, among my constituents.

I had a lot of plans for my district, and it was big enough to take 'em all—300 miles long and 275 miles wide. It had two dozen little

communities, most of them about fifty miles apart, some consisting of only three or four cabin homes of native trappers and fishermen. I laid out a plan to tabulate the population, occupations and needs of each community, and each of the areas where there were no communities—which included more than half the district. A projected road from Fairbanks to Nome would go smack across the middle of the district, and I wanted to make sure it went the way it should. I wanted to get airfields for the outlying districts. Many places needed to have water wells drilled. Doctors, dentists and school facilities were needed all over the place. And I'd thought running McKinley Park was a big job!

I didn't get much chance to do anything about all this in the 1960 legislature. It wasn't the rip-snorting session the first one was, but it was plenty hard-working. Our principal job was to track down sources of revenue: tobacco, liquor, transportation, mining, electricity, food processing—all the things people dislike as an invasion of their private pockets. We had to root about in this prickly tangle for comparatively painless ways to finance the change-over of more than a hundred territorial and federal bureaus, boards, and what-nots; and time was running out on the period of grace the federal government had given its new state to take over and pay for functions like fisheries, mining, oil, intra-state airlines and other regulatory agencies. Finances! There are more dangers hidden in them than there are in a berry patch full of mother grizzlies. Just to give you an example: in the old territorial legislature the legislators got a daily allowance of \$35 during the session. In addition they could charge off postage, telegrams, phone calls, stenographer and other expenses tying into the job. It seemed to us that some of the honorable gentlemen had been making too much of a good thing out of that extra-expense proviso; we totalled up what the extras came to, then substituted a flat \$40-a-day allowance with no extras at all. This saved the state a considerable sum, but what a razzing I took from my old friend John Rumohr for that!

"So you fellows just plain upped your take," he said. "Grant, how do you expect me to vote for you next fall, after that? Besides, you're a Democrat."

Maybe John didn't vote for me, either. Nineteen hundred and sixty was a Republican year in Alaska, and I just squeaked in, winning by twenty-one votes. This was partly my fault. I did very little

campaigning, due to a mix-up with Democratic headquarters in Fairbanks. While I was marking time, waiting for travel funds to campaign out in the far reaches of the district, they thought I was out there doing it. By the same kind of foul-up, my campaign literature arrived too late. If a politician isn't around, and you don't even see his picture nailed to a fence post, he's dead. A lot of people must have thought I'd up and died on them. They're now finding out different—in the '61 legislature I began to get my folks some of those wells and airfields and school allotments I'd thought about.

Alaskans are born gamblers and in that '61 session we ran up a \$23,000,000 gamble. This was called the Highway-Ferry Bill . . . it provided funds for three huge ferries, each to hold 200 cars, carry and feed 600 people, and sleep 100. These ferries would take cars from Prince Rupert, British Columbia, at the end of the new highway through the Canadian Rockies, up the Inside Passage with stop-overs at all the little towns, to Haines, where tourists could roll their cars over the Haines road up to its junction with the Alaska Highway, and on into the Alaska interior. A gamble, sure enough. If the tourists don't come, we'll be stuck with three enormous empty ferry boats. But I don't see how it can miss. A scenic trip through the most beautiful part of the Canadian Rockies . . . a sail up the long, lovely fiords of the Inside Passage . . . drive over the most spectacular part of the Alaska Highway to Fairbanks . . . of course, to McKinley Park . . . later on, to Nome.

There's a new road being put through the eastern part of my district from Fairbanks and Nenana up to McKinley, that will make access to the park even easier. In the summer of '60 I worked on this road, thus raising a little ready cash to put into my house in Nenana. It was ordinary, common labor, just as I'd done thirty-five years before on that road out of Chitina and I think some of my co-workers were a bit surprised that a fellow 60 years old could swing such a mean brush ax. One thing was different from the Chitina days—my boss was also my constituent.

In spite of all this transportation explosion, most Alaskans are primarily concerned with their own local affairs, which they figure are just as important as the rest of the nation's. They reason that if Alaska's tough problems can be solved, America's problems can certainly be. Which brings up a prophecy I read the other day: if the present urban trend continues, by 1970 seventy-five per cent

of the U.S. population will be squeezed onto ten per cent of the U.S. land area.

I don't believe it. I believe they'll come to Alaska instead. And when they do, we'll be ready for 'em. One day last summer I was sitting on the chopping block outside my tundra cabin, getting the tangle out of a fish line. Occasionally I'd glance up at the white crest of McKinley. Out there, I finally got things kind of straightened around in my mind.

You could put it this way: the challenge, most anywhere, is not to climb your highest by yourself—because you can never really climb very high alone. The thing is to go higher along with other fellows . . . sometimes leading, sometimes following, sometimes working all together as a team. As a climber, I like the idea.

APPENDIX

Climbs and Attempted Climbs on Mt. McKinley

1902. Preliminary Prowl. Dr. Alfred Brooks of the U.S. Geological Survey was the first white man to set foot on McKinley's slopes. He headed up a survey party of seven men under orders to proceed from Cook Inlet, go over a pass in the Alaska Range west of McKinley (since called Rainy Pass), then head east, exploring and mapping the north side of the range. Dr. Brooks established a camp near McKinley, and left camp alone one morning, intending to climb to a 10,000-foot shoulder of the mountain. Cliffs and ice turned him back, and at around 5,000 feet he built a rock cairn and put a cartridge shell in it with an account of his journey. (Fifty-two years later, on a trip with John Reed, I found the shell and the note. It was written on exhibit-label paper.) Brooks' reports, writings and maps are still the most complete single work on the McKinley region.

1903. Wickersham Expedition. Judge James Wickersham wound up his first term of court in the new mining camp of Fairbanks, and set out with four cronies to climb the peak. They tried to go up by way of Peters Glacier and were stopped cold by the enormous ice-encrusted cliffs of the north peak. The judge and his party kept on trying until their grub ran out, then went home.

Dr. Frederic Cook Expedition. Cook, with three other men, followed Dr. Brooks' trail from tidewater west of McKinley to the north side of the mountain. They tried going up a ridge on the northwest side, and were stopped at 8,000 feet by a sheer chasm.

Cook then tried Peters Glacier, and was blocked by the same head-wall that had thwarted Judge Wickersham.

1906. First Dr. Cook Expedition. With Herschel Parker, Belmore Browne, a topographer and some packers, Cook attempted to get at McKinley from the south side. They failed to find any way to get out of the sheer canyons onto the mountain slopes, returned to Cook Inlet (named after Capt. James Cook) and disbanded.

Second Dr. Cook Expedition. As recounted in Chapter 12, Cook and a companion, Edward Barrile, trying again from the south, took a launch up the Chulitna River as far as it would go, then hiked over to Ruth Glacier, which Cook claimed they climbed, and on up to the summit. Three years later Barrile signed an affidavit saying that he and Cook had never reached the top of the mountain.

1910. The Sourdough Expedition. More or less to prove whether or not Dr. Cook's claims were true, a party of Kantishna miners organized the "Sourdough Party," the first successful climb to McKinley's upper reaches (see also Chapter 12). They discovered the most feasible route to the top, via Muldrow Glacier. Of the four who started up the Glacier, Bill Taylor and Pete Anderson made it to the top of the north peak, carrying a 14-foot flagpole to show telescope watchers in Fairbanks. They thought they were on the real summit, not knowing that the north peak is 850 feet below the south peak.

Parker-Browne Expedition. Belmore Browne and Herschel Parker made another stab at climbing the mountain from the south side, which they found to be an impossibility under conditions of that day. Their main achievement was to find the spot, above Ruth Glacier at around 5,000 feet, where Dr. Cook took the picture he claimed in his book on his 1906 "climb" was the summit of McKinley. (See also Chapter 12)

Another party led by C. E. Rust of Portland, Oregon, made a similar attempt to scale the peak from the south side, with the same complete lack of success.

1912. Cairns Expedition. Ralph H. Cairns, with Martin Nash and George Lewis, made another try at Peters Glacier. They reconnoitered, met the usual difficulties that Peters Glacier threw at climbers, were caught for days in spring storms, and gave up.

Parker-Browne Expedition. Browne and Parker came within an ace of making it this time (see Chapter 12). With another climber, Merle LaVoy, they followed the sourdough's route up Muldrow; within a short distance of the top, a sudden blizzard drove them down to their camp at 17,000 feet. Two days later they made another try, but clouds dropped down and enveloped them. Discouraged and out of food, they trudged back down the mountain—and thus saved their lives. The day they reached their base camp the Katmai earthquake shook Denali and smashed to bits the route they had just taken back down the mountain.

1913. Stuck-Karstens Expedition. The first expedition to reach the true summit, the south peak, 20,320 feet. (See also Chapter 12) It consisted of Episcopal Archdeacon Hudson Stuck, Harry Karstens, Walter Harper and Robert Tatum.

An amusing incident started off this climb: an Indian named Minchumina John caught up with the party at their base camp on Cache Creek, bringing with him his wife and baby; the three had travelled about a hundred miles to see the archdeacon. They wanted their baby baptized, which ceremony Stuck happily performed. Minchumina John then said, "Now, maybe you will marry us, please?" The startled cleric married them instantly, realizing that the order of his ceremonies was in direct reverse of that decreed by canonical custom.

When the Stuck-Karstens party had inched their way up the shattered northeast ridge above Muldrow, they caught sight of the flagpole the sourdoughs had left on the north peak. Their report of this, later, squelched the scoffers who had been saying the sourdoughs had never really made it.

1928. Jaross Attempt. You couldn't call this an expedition, and it was stopped before it got started. However, the intention was there. Stephen Jaross of Poland arrived at the park and after talking with

Harry Karstens, decided that the superintendent had a personal reason for trying to prevent him from climbing the mountain. Therefore, without telling Karstens, he hired as guide a trapper named Leo Coppa, and the two set out for McKinley with packs on their backs. At McGonagall Pass both food and footgear gave out; the two stumbled back to the Kantishna, where Joe and Fannie Quigley gave them enough supplies to get them back to the railroad.

1932. Lindley-Liek Expedition. As outlined in Chapters 12, 13, and 14, this expedition—made up of Alfred Lindley, Harry Liek, Erling Strom and Grant Pearson, was the first to climb both south and north peaks. On the way down they encountered tragedy in the form of the

Cosmic Ray Party. (See also Chapter 14) Allen Carpe, a scientist, headed up a party of five which also included Theodore Koven, Percy Olten, E. P. Beckwith and Nicholas Spadavecchia. They were not trying to climb to the top; they had been landed on the glacier by plane, and they merely wanted to make cosmic ray observations at 11,000 feet. The Lindley-Liek party, returning after a successful climb, came on the abandoned tent of Carpe and Koven, and farther on found Koven's frozen body. He had evidently fallen into a crevasse, been injured, but managed to crawl out. Carpe was never found, and it was presumed he had fallen into the same crevasse. Farther down the mountain, the Lindley-Liek climbers found two other men in a lower camp—Beckwith seriously ill, Olten taking care of him. Spadavecchia had gone down the mountain to phone for a plane to take out Beckwith. But he had gone in the wrong direction. Rangers Lee Swisher and John Rumohr followed his tracks and recued him—an operation that required a 180-mile hike.

These grim events remained unmatched in tragic drama until May of 1960, when the mountain killed two men, injured two more, and struck down another climber with near-fatal altitude sickness.

1942. United States Army Test Expedition. This expedition was organized to test food, clothing and equipment under Arctic warfare conditions. There were 18 men in the party, and it inaugurated

something new and different in mountain climbing technique: with the Army in charge, every modern aid was used, regardless of cost—motorized equipment brought the detail 90 miles from the railroad; planes air-dropped food and supplies to camps as high as 18,000 feet; portable radios provided instant communication. Seven men went to the top: Capt. Robert H. Bates; Capt. Albert H. Jackman; Lt. Peter Webb of the Canadian air force; QMC consultants Einar Nilsson, Sterling B. Hendricks and Terris Moore (later president of the University of Alaska); and Bradford Washburn, a veteran mountaineer now Director of the Boston Museum of Science.

1947. The "White Tower" Expedition. As described in Chapter 19, I was on this expedition organized by Bradford Washburn with the backing of the film company making *The White Tower*. Pictures taken were to be used as background in the film. Washburn also made several scientific studies—of cosmic rays, glacier movement, weather etc. Eight of our party got to the top: Washburn; his wife Barbara, the first woman to climb to the top; Lt. William Hackett; William Deeke; George Browne; James Gale; Robert Craig and Robert Lange. As reported, I got as far as 19,300 when Denali's ol' devil altitude got me.

Ex-G.I. Expedition. Three veterans of the Tenth Mountain Troop, Morton S. Wood, Gordon Herreid and George Schumann, pioneered a climb with a minimum of expense and a minimum of supplies—only 120 pounds per man. They got as high as 17,000 feet when one of the men was badly hit by altitude sickness, and the other two had to help him back down the mountain. They didn't make it, but they proved that Denali didn't rule out climbers with lightweight food and a low budget.

Alaska University Expedition. Later that same summer Gordon Herreid got together with two other Alaska University students, Henry Daub and Frank Mills. They had the advantage of Herreid's knowledge, plus a great amount of food abandoned on the mountain by the White Tower party. This time luck was with Herreid; all three made it to the top in fast time.

1948. In July Walter L. Gonnason, John McCall and Charles E. Piper went to the top via the now well-tramped-out McGonagall-Muldrow route.

1951. Washburn West Buttress Climb. Up to this time, everybody who had made it to the top had gone by way of Muldrow Glacier and Karstens Ridge. Bradford Washburn decided that mountaineering on Denali had gotten into a rut; he organized an expedition to attack the mountain from the southwest, via Kahiltna Glacier and what is known as the West Buttress. All eight in the party made it to the top by this new route. They went in three waves: Washburn, James Gale, and Capt. William Hackett, all veterans of the White Tower ascent, in the first group; next, Drs. Henry A. Buchtel and John V. Ambler, and Barry C. Bishop; then Melvin Griffiths and Jerry Moore. After the climb, Alaska University President Terris Moore landed his ski-equipped plane on Kahiltna Glacier and whisked the party out to civilization.

1952. Hackett Party. It was getting to be a habit with William Hackett. His third trip up was via Muldrow leading a party consisting of Robert Anderson, Robert Goodwin and Ernst Bauman.

Mexican Red Cross Party. For sheer efficiency and machine-like team work, this six-man expedition calling themselves the "Mexican Red Cross Party" beat anything I'd ever seen. The six unpacked their equipment at McKinley station with clockwork precision, and got ready to take off with scarcely a word needed. Their equipment was also the most precisely efficient I'd ever seen—each lightweight sleeping bag was exactly tailored to fit the man; each man had compact equipment and 30 days' ultra-concentrated rations—and the entire pack weighed only 64 pounds per man. Their food, by the way, was 60% fat and sweets, a proportion they said was best for fighting altitude sickness. They dispensed with snowshoes or skis. "Our packs are light," they said, "and there are six of us. We shall take turns breaking trail."

Of course, these men were veteran climbers; one of the party, Higinio Alvarado Reyes, a man of fifty, had climbed every high peak in Mexico. So naturally, they marched up Muldrow, through the jumble of Karstens Ridge and on to the summit with no trouble, and added their names to the others who had climbed to the top of Denali: Eduardo de Maria Campos; Cristobal Abarea Alvares; Guillermo Garcia Colin; Agustin Guerrero Dias; Higinio Alvarado Reyes; Eduardo San Vincente Cravioto.

Errett Expedition. A coalition of three groups—from California, from the University of Alaska, and from Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks—united under Chester Errett. They attempted to climb McKinley via the West Buttress. The party lost one of their horses carrying important equipment, and had to return, having reached only 12,000 feet.

Mexican Explorers Club. Exactly opposite of the Mexican Red Cross Party was this group of four Mexican citizens who attempted the climb without proper equipment. I was park superintendent at the time, and at first refused to let them go, because they did not have enough food. Park regulations required a 30 days' supply; they had only 10 days'. Finally, sensing an international incident in the making, I said, "I'll let you go if you'll promise to come back when you have only two days' food left." They agreed.

The four reached 8,500 feet on Muldrow, got down to their food limit, and came back.

1953. Four men taking the Muldrow-Karstens Ridge route fought their way up through Denali's usual assortment of rain, fog, snow and avalanches, and three made it to the top: Fritz Lippman, Tom Steinburn and David Collins. The fourth man, Keith Hart, was halted by an unusual ailment for a McKinley climber: at 17,000 feet he got sunstroke.

Errett Party. Chester Errett had bad luck with this one, too. His group was forced back at Browne's Tower, 14,600 feet, because one of the party had frozen feet.

1954. Elton Thayer Expedition. Park Ranger Elton Thayer led a four-man party in an attack on McKinley from a route heretofore considered impossible—up Ruth Glacier, along the top of the South Buttress to Browne's Tower. All four—Thayer, George Argus, Leslie Viereck and Morton Wood (of the '47 G.I. Expedition)—made it to the top. But coming back they proved again, and tragically, the old maxim that you've never conquered a mountain until you've gotten back down. Roped together at 13,800 feet on Karstens Ridge, they slipped—and slid a thousand feet down the side. Thayer was killed instantly. Argus injured his hip and couldn't move; Viereck hurt his ribs; only Wood got off with minor in-

juries. Wood and Viereck moved Argus to a safe spot at the head of Muldrow, left him with food and fuel and hiked down to Wonder Lake for help.

The 74th Air Rescue Squadron was called in, and managed by foot and helicopter to get Argus to safety after a two weeks' struggle.

Climb via Northwest Ridge. By now men were attacking Denali from all sides. In May of 1954 Dr. Donald McClean took a new route via Straightaway Glacier and the Northwest Ridge to North Peak; for some reason he did not try to scale South Peak, the real summit. The party consisted of McClean, Henry Maybahn, Fred Beckey, Charles Wilson, and that three-time veteran, Capt. William Hackett. All made it safely, though the party lost a supply-dropping plane in the process—forced down by wind turbulence into a crash landing on Straightaway Glacier. The pilot and his wife climbed out unhurt. The plane is still there.

In August of the same year a group of five made it to the top of South Peak via Muldrow, without incident: Woodrow Sayre, Norman Hansen, Jack Lasner, Jon Gradey, Norman Sanders.

1956. This year Denali repelled four sets of invaders:

A party from England, led by Capt. Scott of the Royal Air Force, tested equipment on the mountain, but were not able to make it to the top.

Walter Gonnason (of the 1948 Expedition) and three others attempted to follow the route that Dr. Cook claimed to have taken in 1906. They retreated after reaching an elevation of about 12,000 feet. In spite of this defeat, Gonnason remarked that McKinley could be climbed by that route, and threatened the mountain with another attempt at a later date.

Keith Hart, who had been defeated by sunstroke in 1953, made an attempt to climb the north peak by following a ridge that partly borders Muldrow on the north. It proved to be far from feasible, and Hart led his party back down again.

Four Mexican climbers made an attempt via Muldrow. Part of their supplies were air-dropped to them when they were at about 8,000 feet. Some of their most vital equipment went into a crevasse; they

did not have time to secure replacements, and had to abandon their try.

1957. This was the year the mountain put a "Road Closed" sign on Muldrow Glacier. This effectively blocked a party of eight mountaineers from Everett, Wash. Muldrow had made a sudden rapid downhill movement the winter before; it was still heaving and shifting in June. The great seracs and crevasses changed from day to day. Travel on it was impossible. Kenneth Carpenter, the expedition's leader, had to call off the climb at 8,500 feet.

1958. Two groups scaled the South Peak via the West Buttress on the same day, July 2: the first consisted of David Dingman, William Blanchard, John Breitenbach, David Dorman, Ross Kennedy and Capt. William Hackett (his fourth time up—on top, he must have had to step carefully to avoid walking in his own tracks). In the second party up that day were Edward Cooper, Sgt. Robert Elliott, Bruce Gilbert, Fergus O'Connor.

1959. In a stormy May Denali turned back a four-man expedition attempting the West Buttress route. Dr. George Cloutier, the leader, reluctantly turned his back on the summit at 17,000 feet, in blizzard weather.

But a month later John Breitenbach of the '58 expedition led another four-man group successfully to the top via a new South Face route. The other climbers were Pete Sinclair, Bill Buckingham, Barry Corbet.

1960. With all the scientific aids and super-efficient techniques that climbers now had at their command, the mountain appeared to be licked. Early in May three Japanese expeditions swarmed up the South Peak. The Meiji University Expedition went up via the West Buttress: Susumu Takahashi, Seigi Doi, Kiyoshi Mimuro, Koshihiro Fujita. Ten days later Takahashi, Doi and Mimuro did it again, with four others: Tsuneo Kanazawa, Mahito Higashi, Koji Kobayshi and Takahiko Matsuda.

There were also two expeditions from Waseda University on the mountain: Takamasa Yosizaka and Akira Yamamoto went up May

13 via the West Buttress, and the next day, Mantaro Koto, Masayasu Teratani, Syunsuke Imamura and Yoshihiko Kikusima made the climb by the West Rib and South Face.

The West Buttress route, pioneered by Bradford Washburn in 1951, had now become the most popular road to the summit. On May 17th two more parties followed it to the top, met there and gave each other congratulations that turned out to be tragically premature.

The first party was organized by Mrs. Helga Bading, an Anchorage housewife, and consisted of Mrs. Bading, Paul Crews, Dr. Rodman Wilson, Chuck Metzger and Andy Brauchli. All the men made it to the summit, but Mrs. Bading had been hit by altitude sickness and remained in the party's last camp a few thousand feet below.

The Anchorage climbers were joined on top by an expedition led by John Day of Oregon, and including Lou and Jim Whitaker, and Pete Schoening. The Anchorage party started down first, followed shortly by the others, who roped up 25 feet apart for the descent.

Near their camp, the Anchorage party heard a wild cry, turned and saw their fellow climbers, 1,200 feet higher, all in a tumbling plunge down the slope.

Someone had slipped. The four men fell 400 feet. When they came to a halt, John Day had a broken leg, Schoening was out on his feet with a concussion, Jim Whitaker was dazed and only his brother Lou was no more than badly shaken up.

At the Anchorage camp two things were happening: Dr. Wilson was caring for Mrs. Bading, whose oxygen-starved condition had rapidly worsened into moaning hysteria; and Paul Crews was frantically calling Anchorage on the party's portable radio, asking for help in the double disaster on the mountain.

This set off a rescue reaction that reached clear back to Boston and Bradford Washburn. While Crews was climbing up to the Day party, after sending his radio message, carrying medicines and a light tent to cover the injured men, the news services in Anchorage were spreading to the whole world the story of the five people caught on McKinley. Washburn read the story next day and immediately got on the phone to Don Sheldon, a friend and famous bush pilot of Talkeetna, Alaska. He told Sheldon what few others knew: that there was a fairly level glacier landing spot at 14,200

feet on the west side of McKinley, within rescue reach of Mrs. Bading. Sheldon took off immediately, made an uphill landing on the glacier, and when her comrades brought her down, took Mrs. Bading out to safety.

Meanwhile, in another small plane, William Stevenson of Anchorage, with an army observer along, was trying to drop supplies to John Day, higher up on the peak with a broken leg. Stevenson stalled in a turn, flew at a cliff—and in the short instant of that turn the mountain took two lives.

At the same time, another Alaska bush pilot, Link Luckett, was throwing battery, radio and a door out of his helicopter, in an attempt to raise its ceiling from 16,000 to 17,500 feet, so he could come in close to Day. When Luckett took off, his blades chopped the air hard enough so the lightened craft made it to a ledge near the injured man; Crews and Dr. Wilson, who had set Day's leg, got him to the 'copter, and Luckett flew him 7,000 feet down the mountain to where Sheldon was waiting on a broad, level stretch of glacier to take him the rest of the way to a hospital. Luckett then went back to the ledge and brought Schoening out.

The score for this "successful" climb of Mt. McKinley: two dead, two injured, one hit by near-fatal altitude sickness. A mountain is never climbed until you're safely down it.

But climbers simply will not be scared of a mountain. Ten days after that disaster, seven men led by Glenn Kelsey of Bremerton, Wash., marched up the West Buttress route to the top and down again, unscathed. Others in the party were Jack Newman, Ray Harniss, Paul Williams, Jerry Koch, Jim Richardson and Don Anderson.

1961. This was the year that marked Denali's most unexpected defeat. Ever since men had first looked speculatively at McKinley's various soaring, forbidding slopes, when they saw the sheer wall of the south face they turned away with a shrug or a shudder. It included a 6,000-foot cliff of gray granite and blue-white, shining ice. No place for any human.

On the nineteenth of July, 1961, this defeatist view was put to a decisive end. A team of six men from the Italian Alpine Club scaled that cliff with ropes and pitons and painfully frostbitten feet,

finally heaved themselves up over the top ledge and stood up on the South Peak. (I had looked over the top of that cliff when I was up there in '32; my first instinct was to jump back.)

Bradford Washburn, notified of the ascent by telegram, called it "the greatest achievement in American mountaineering history."

The men who accomplished the feat were Riccardo Cassin, 53-year-old leader of the expedition; Gian Canali, Romano Perego, Luigi Alippi, Annibale Zucchi and Luigi Arraldi.

Denali didn't let the six off unscathed. All were lashed by winds and sub-zero temperatures; frostbite stabbed Gian Canali's feet so sharp and deep that after the climb back down the south face cliff his companions had to carry him the rest of the way to their base camp on the glacier. They had one piece of good luck. They had made previous arrangements to have bush pilot Don Sheldon fly in and meet them on a certain date—which date happened to be the very next day. Sheldon landed his ski plane on the glacier on schedule, and was surprised to see the team of climbers sledding a man down the glacier to his plane. Sheldon flew Canali out to safety as he had done with Mrs. Helga Bading the year before.

Earlier in the year three parties had scaled the peak via the now well-explored West Buttress route. Most notable among mountaineers was 65-year-old John D. Graham, who headed a climbing party that included Felix Julen, Richard Stenmark and Adolph Reist.

Ten days later, on May 21st, four men followed the same ice-and-rock trail: Werner Himmelsbach, John Wilson, Ralph Hutchinson and James Woodfield. On July 14 William Blanchard led a party over his well-remembered route of 1958; others were Charles Saylor, Bruce Meyer, Jules Eichorn, Jack Henry, Dick Kauffman, Don Gordon and Monty Alford.

But it was the six Italians, climbing McKinley's last unconquered south face, who achieved the final taming of Denali. They brought to 116 the number of toiling, mountain-fascinated men who had set foot on the summit of McKinley since Bishop Stuck and Harry Karstens led the first expedition to the top in 1913.

PHIL NEWILL AND GRANT PEARSON first got together in the spruce grove at McKinley Park headquarters back in the summer of 1946. Pearson was park superintendent, and Newill was using a vacation from the advertising business in New York to roam around Alaska collecting material for travel articles. They hit it off at once. It was Newill's idea that no vacation should be used for anything but traveling around viewing as many as possible of nature's spectacular chunks of scenery. He had become dedicated to telling other people this fact . . . if you can be said to be dedicated to something you thoroughly enjoy.

This attitude toward life and nature started in Portland, Oregon, where Phil Newill grew up and spent his non-school time hiking and camping on mountains, lakes and rivers, climbing Mt. Hood, riding a bicycle from Portland to Los Angeles, and engaging in other field-and-stream types of activity. At Stanford University he got bitten by the typewriter bug, edited the college newspaper, and in a few years found himself in New York writing advertisements around such headlines as "Nature in the Raw is Seldom Mild" (as any woods traveler knows).

It was a natural for Phil Newill and Grant Pearson to team up. As Newill says, "Grant is the kind of guy who has lived a life that is exciting to hear about . . . and even more exciting to write about."

